

## Matthew 21:33-46 Bible Study Transcript

We are in a new study guide this morning. If you haven't picked yours up, there is one on the back table. Matthew chapter 21, finishing out the chapter, verses 33-46.

The chapter opened up with the procession of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on that first day of Passover, that Palm Sunday as we call it. As He enters into the city with the throngs of people - and as I've told you over the last couple of weeks, there were a couple million people in Jerusalem there to celebrate the Passover. A very crowded place. Jesus goes to the Temple and finds the merchants buying and selling. He throws everybody out. Tells everybody to leave. Overturns the money changers table. And then on the way out, spending His evenings of Passover week in Bethany with Mary and Martha and Lazarus. It was their home and He would travel back in the next morning; but in the evening hours He would spend them in Bethany with Mary and Martha and Lazarus. And on His way out He sees a fig tree. Approaching it, thinking there should be fruit on it, but there was no fruit. The history of fig trees is the tree bears fruit before it bears leaves. So when Jesus saw the leaves on the fig tree, He expected there to be fruit and there was no fruit, just leaves. So Jesus cursed the fig tree. He said, "Let no more fruit be borne by you anymore." Mark says it was withered and died from the roots up.

Then, last week, in one of the Lord's visits in town the religious leaders approached Him and said, "Who gave You this authority?" Chasing the people out of the courtyard area. And remember the courtyard area is about 20 acres large in the Temple area, with a farmer's market type set up with tents and tables and trying to help the people as they come in for Passover. Of course they were making money off of them, which is why Jesus chased them out. But they said, "Who gave you this authority? Who gave You the authority to curse that fig tree?" Not the fact that it was cursed, and it was done they were not questioning the actual miracle itself; but *who gave You the authority?* And Jesus, if you remember last week, Jesus said, "I'll tell you what, I'll answer your question if you answer one for Me. John the Baptist's ministry was it from heaven or was it from man?" They got together and huddled together. They said, "Now if we say John's ministry was from heaven then they're going to say, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' If we say John's ministry is from man..." They feared the people because the people took John to be a prophet. So they came back to Jesus and said, "We don't know. We can't answer You." Jesus said, "Well neither can I answer you," which is showing His authority. He is in charge.

Then Jesus said - He presented a parable to them, The Parable of the Two Sons - He said there were two sons. A man told one of his sons to go out in the vineyard and work and he said, "Okay, I'll go," but then in the end he didn't go. He told another son of his likewise, "Go into the vineyard and work." And he says, "No, I am not going to go," but he eventually went. So He says to those who were questioning Him, these leaders, "Which one of these did the will of the father?" They said, "Well the one that said he wasn't going to go but then eventually went. He did the will of the father." He says, "That's right." He said, "The Kingdom of God is going to be taken from you (the leaders) and given to the harlots and the tax collectors." And so they became pretty angry, pretty upset. But that's nothing compared to what is next parable is going to be.

For today, verses 33-46, The Parable of the Wicked Farmers. Verses 33-40, The Contents of the Parable.

**Hear another parable: A certain man was a housemaster (or homeowner) who planted a vineyard.** Now there are six things he is going to list here that he did. The first one is plant a vineyard. This parable is taken from Isaiah 5:1-11 where the vineyard represents Israel. If you jump ahead to verse 45, the next to the last verse of the chapter you realize that by the time we get through with this, the religious leaders are going to comprehend that He's talking to them about them. It is not the parable itself but how the parable applies to these religious leaders. So, The Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-11. The vineyard is just like the fig tree, it represents Israel in the Old Testament. God planted His vineyard and sent out His servants, prophets, religious leaders, to tend His vineyard.

**A certain man was a housemaster, who:**

- (1) **planted a vineyard**, first thing he did
- (2) **and placed a hedge around it** to keep the wild animals out
- (3) **and dug a winepress in it**,
- (4) **and built a tower** so that somebody could watch out over the vineyard for people coming in, marauders coming in and stealing any of the crops.
- (5) **And he rented it to farmers**, this was the customary thing to do because sixthly it tells us,
- (6) **and left the country.**

It's a customary thing to do that when a landowner has this full working vineyard with wine press and towers and hedges, he rented it out to farmers. And what they did was they would rent the land out to farmers and the payment for the rent was a certain percentage of the crop. And once the farmers came and they made a deal as to what percentage of the crop the owner would get - it takes up to five years for the stalks to reach a point where it's bearing fruit. So he rents it out to farmers and the farmers represented the leaders of Israel. Of course the father goes away.

It says in verse 34, **And when the season of the fruits drew near**,  
It came time, almost 5 years and it is time to bear fruit. So the homeowner,

**he sent his slaves to the farmers**

Remember the farmers represent the leaders of Israel.

**to receive his fruits.**

That's the bargain.

**And when the farmers took his slaves,**

Again slaves now represent the prophets. God sent His prophets to receive the fruit from the leaders of the vineyard.

**When the farmers took his slaves, (which would be the prophets) one indeed, they beat, and one they killed, and one they stoned. And he sent other slaves,**

which means other prophets were sent after they killed the first group of prophets.

**he sent other slaves more than the first. And they did likewise to them.**

They beat them. Killed some. Stoned some.

**But lastly, he sent his son to them,**

This is the one who's going to inherit the vineyard to begin with.

**he sent his son,**

Which is the figure of Jesus Christ the Messiah.

**he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But when the farmers saw the son, they said among themselves, "This is the heir (Or the inheritor). Come, we should kill him, and we should possess his inheritance." And having taken him, they threw *him* out of the vineyard.**

The word *out* literally is *outside* the vineyard, which is an interesting detail you should mark in your Scriptures if you haven't.

**they threw *him* outside of the vineyard and killed *him*.**

It tells us in Hebrews 13:12-13, it says, **In order that Jesus might sanctify the people with His own blood, He suffered outside of the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him outside of the camp, bearing His reproach.** So the city would not be made unclean, they crucified Jesus outside the camp, outside of the city, upon a hill outside of the city. And so here it speaks of them throwing him outside of the vineyard so as not to stain the vineyard, and they killed the homeowner's son.

**Therefore, whenever the lord of the vineyard should come, what will he do to those farmers?** So He now poses the question to the religious leaders.

The Confrontation with these Religious Leaders now starts in verses 41-44. **They say to Him, "He will severely destroy those wicked *men*, and he will rent out the vineyard to other farmers, who will give to him the fruits in their seasons." Jesus says to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures?"**

He is now going to quote and make reference to Psalm 118:22-23.

**"Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'A Stone which the builders rejected (*builders* being the leaders of Israel)**

**'A Stone which the builders rejected, this One became the Head of *the* Corner? This became from the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes?' Did you never read that?"** Well, of course they had. It is one of the Hallel Psalms that is read every year, especially at Passover time. So He's now making application of the stone, meaning Himself, has been rejected and they are the ones who rejected.

**"On account of this I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you, and it will be given to a nation producing the fruits of it."**

The vineyard is going to be turned over to somebody else.

**"And the one having fallen upon this Stone will be broken; but upon whom It should fall, It will grind him to powder."**

One of the most powerful verses in the Scripture is verse 44. He's telling them, "You have rejected the Son who came for the fruit."

Just like the prophecy said, the stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. They used to build their buildings by constructing the corner first and there would be a head cornerstone which all the rest of the building would be lined up with. So the whole building will be built from off of that stone. You reject the head cornerstone the whole building doesn't fit together, and you can't build it. So Jesus came as that stone, as that Son who was rejected.

A person's life. A person has two choices, either to fall upon the stone and be broken or the stone will fall on you and grind you to powder. Those are the choices. It doesn't give you much of a choice does it? Except one is brokenness and one is judgment. The process of being broken or the judgment by the stone.

The process of being broken is the way of expressing spiritual strength. Paul said in II Corinthians 12:9 that God said unto him when he prayed - he had this health issue in his body and he prayed three times for the Lord to heal him, and the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you." You don't need to be healed. "For My strength is made perfect in weakness." God's strength is made perfect in weakness. Paul says, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon me. So when I am weak then I am strong," Paul says. And so Paul entered into that relationship with the Lord that many Christians really have trouble entering in with; that is accepting the circumstances around us as breaking us to the point that we become weak, to the point that our strength then becomes the Lord. These religious leaders that Jesus is talking to they are religious-centered, ego-centered, and Jesus said either you fall on the stone and be broken or the stone will fall on you and grind you to powder.

In Psalm 34:17-18 the psalmist said, **The righteous cry, and the Lord hears, and delivers them from out of all of their troubles. The Lord is near unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as be of a contrite spirit.** A broken spirit. He is near people who are weak, who are suffering, in hardship.

In Psalm 38:8 the psalmist said, **I'm feeble and severely broken: I have roared by reason of my disquietness (or my groaning) of my heart.** Out of brokenness and hardship God's people cried out to God. All through the Scriptures, Old Testament and New, it was while God's people were in suffering and hardship that they cry out to God.

I think is interesting that if I'm not suffering and not in hardship, I don't cry out to God. I thank Him. I pray to Him for others. But it is not until I'm in hardship, not until I'm broken do I cry out to Him who is the strength of my life.

The psalmist said in Psalm 51:17, **The sacrifices of God are broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart** (that is, *a grieving heart*) **God will not despise.** What is the sacrifice people try to make? God is not pleased with any type of sacrifice other than a broken heart, and a spirit that's broken; offering to Him a broken life, a broken way. We fall on Him to be broken or He falls on us to grind us to powder. Those are the choices.

Verses 45 and 46, The Comprehension of the Religious Leaders. **And having heard His parables**, notice plural. They saw The Fig Tree, the Parable of the Two Sons, now The Parable of the Wicked Farmers.

**After they heard His parables, the chief priests and the Pharisees knew that He is speaking concerning them.**

"You're talking about us, aren't you?"

"Yep."

**And seeking to grab Him, they feared the crowds, because they were holding Jesus to be a prophet.** So He made them angry. They wanted to grab Him and take Him away and take Him out and do to Him what was done in the parable. To kill Him. But they didn't dare because the people held Jesus to be a prophet and they knew Jesus was popular with the people. So they didn't dare touch Him.

You can see that there is constant contention, constant anger over people with Jesus. And Jesus basically says, "You must fall upon the stone and be broken, or the stone will fall on you and break you to powder." Hardest thing to grasp in the Christian life, not salvation. Once you're saved the hardest thing to grasp is that there is a life of brokenness waiting because that's the sacrifice we make to God, a broken person.

Like we celebrated in communion this morning, we remember the brokenness of Christ on the cross. We remember His shed blood. But that's just a reminder to us that if we ever wonder to the Lord, "Lord, why is this happening to me?" Everything always goes back to the cross. Why did that happen to Jesus on the cross? Brokenness. He had to suffer for our sins so that we would not have to suffer for our sins. On the other hand we are sinners. We are egotistical. We are self-centered. So the Lord brings various circumstances and situations into our life to break us. First of all, we respond by complaining, "Why does this have to happen to me?" But it's to bring brokenness, so that we come to Him.

Like Paul said in that quote from II Corinthians 12:9, "Most gladly therefore I will rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Because when I'm weak then I'm strong." When I'm humanly weak, I'm spiritually strong in the Lord.

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Or as John the Baptist said, "He must increase and I must decrease." We get in the way. We lead our own lives the way we want it to go, while believing in Jesus at the same time. And He says that won't make it. Believing in Jesus and following Him as Lord, we are followers. And when we are no longer following, He brings the brokenness so that we are broken before Him and we take our proper place, following behind Him.

Let's close with prayer.