

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 20:9-18

Peace to you, brothers and sisters; this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time for our Bible study again. We are continuing our reading of Luke chapter 20, and today we will look at verses 9 through 18.

We have reached the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry. He no longer avoids the Jewish ruling class of that time but instead directly points out their faults; even in the process of answering them, He shows great wisdom. In Luke 20:1–8, Jesus wisely handled their questioning of His authority. Following that, Jesus takes the initiative to tell the surrounding people, as well as the chief priests, scribes, and elders, how God intends to deal with the people and the nation of Israel. He does this through a parable—one that they should have been very familiar with. We will examine several different passages in today's study. While we might lack this background knowledge, it would have been very clear to the Israelites of that day, especially the chief priests, scribes, and elders who were well-versed in the Old Testament. Let us look closely at what Jesus said to them.

Verse 9: "Then He began to tell the people this parable: 'A certain man planted a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time'"

Jesus told a parable about a vineyard. The "certain man [who] planted a vineyard" represents God planting a vineyard, which He then "leased to vinedressers." Historically, in Israel, all those in power—the rulers and governors—were merely leasing the vineyard from God. They did not own the vineyard; they rented it from Him. Afterward, this man went to a far country for a long time.

First, we must understand what the vineyard represents. The first mention of Israel as a vineyard is found in Psalm 80, a psalm of Asaph. Verse 8 says, "You

have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it" . This psalm describes how God delivered the Israelites from Egypt and brought them into the beautiful land. The following verses describe how God blessed this vine, letting it take deep root and fill the land. However, because of the rebellion of the Israelites, God broke down its hedges, allowing all who pass by to pluck its fruit. Therefore, in verse 14, there is a plea to God: "Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts; Look down from heaven and see, and visit this vine." Later, many prophets used this same metaphor and typology to speak to Israel.

Isaiah 5:7 tells us, "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help." Isaiah very directly pointed out Israel's rebellion against God. God desired justice, but they were oppressive; He desired righteousness, but there was only a cry of distress. Later, the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah also used the vine to symbolize the people of Israel.

The same is true in the book of Hosea. The prophet Hosea says in Hosea 10:1–2, "Israel is an empty vine; He brings forth fruit for himself. According to the multitude of his fruit he has increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have embellished his sacred pillars. Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty. He will break down their altars; He will ruin their sacred pillars" Because of God's blessing, they became prosperous; because of His blessing, their lives became comfortable. Yet, after attaining wealth and ease, their hearts became divided. They added other altars to worship other gods and cast beautiful pillars as their idols. Therefore, God would come to tear down their altars and destroy their pillars.

When Jesus tells this parable of the vineyard, we must keep this background in mind.

Verse 10: "Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they might give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the vinedressers beat him and sent him away empty-handed."

Remember, this man owns the vineyard and leases it to vinedressers. Thus, the leaders, officials, and rulers of Israel were merely leasing this vineyard from God, and God would eventually call them to give an account. When the time came, He sent a servant—these servants represent the prophets of the Old Testament—to the vineyard. What happened? The vinedressers beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

Verses 11–12: "Again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also and cast him out" .

Using these verses, Jesus clearly depicted the historical heart of God toward Israel. God chose and showed favor to the people of Israel so that they would act justly, love mercy, and walk with Him. Instead, they used the abundance God gave them to fulfill their personal desires, resulting in a society filled with injustice and unrighteousness. Throughout Old Testament history, God repeatedly sent His prophets to the people of Israel and their rulers to issue a call to return; however, they refused to listen, driving them away, beating them, and wounding them.

Verse 13: "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Probably they will respect him when they see him'" .

At this point, Jesus no longer hides His identity. Through this teaching and parable, He illustrates that while the people of Israel did not listen to what the prophets preached in the past, God has now taken a different approach: He has personally sent His beloved Son, who is Jesus.

Verse 14: "But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours'" .

God's beloved Son was meant to inherit all of God's estate. Yet, because these vinedressers were preoccupied with wealth and various comforts, they actually killed the Son of God, the heir.

Verse 15: "So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them?" .

When Jesus gave this example, there were only a few days left before He would go to the cross; On one hand, He was beginning to speak a prophecy. Although what God intended would surely come to pass, Jesus spoke so directly to this group—especially the ruling chief priests, elders, and scribes—perhaps so that some might hear and repent and might therefore be saved . This is especially true of His final question: "Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them?" Jesus knew in His heart that these people had already begun plotting to get rid of Him. Therefore, Jesus made it very clear that they were merely tenants leasing from the owner, and one day the owner would come to call them to account. How would they face the owner on that day?

Verse 16: "He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others." And when they heard it, they said, "Certainly not!" .

In the parallel passage, Matthew 21:43, Jesus says even more directly: "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it." The "vineyard" of the Old Testament gradually evolves into the "Kingdom of God" in the New Testament. Since the Israelites did not bear fruit, God would transfer the vineyard to people who would.

Verse 17: "Then He looked at them and said, 'What then is this that is written: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone?'"

Jesus again used a scripture they were familiar with to tell them plainly that He is the Stone rejected by these "builders"—the chief priests, scribes, and elders—and that this Stone has become the chief cornerstone. In construction, the cornerstone is the most important piece; it is usually the first stone laid, and once in place, it connects two walls. Christ is the sole foundation for the building of the church; He is the church's cornerstone. Only with Christ can the church be properly fitted, joined, and built together. For those who have faith and recognize that Jesus is the Christ, He is the chief cornerstone; upon this foundation, we can continue to build.

Verse 18a: "Whoever falls on that stone will be broken."

On one hand, He is the cornerstone for building; on the other, He is a stumbling stone. In Romans 9:32, it tells us that the Jews sought it by works rather than by faith, and as a result, Christ became a stumbling stone to them. In 1 Corinthians 1:23, Paul also says that the crucified Christ is a stumbling block to the Jews. In 1 Peter 2:7–8, Peter tells us very clearly: "Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,' and 'A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense.' They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed" .

Verse 18b: "but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder" .

Jesus called Himself a stone, the stone rejected by the builders; yet this stone has become the cornerstone for the building of the church. The church is a group of people saved through faith in Jesus Christ, built together. Christ is the cornerstone and the foundation of this building; for those who do not believe, this stone

becomes a stumbling stone. This is something that has already happened and is currently ongoing.

One day, when the time is fulfilled, He will return as King to reign on earth, which refers to the second half of verse 18: "but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." The background for this reference is found in Daniel chapter 2, where Daniel interprets for King Nebuchadnezzar the dream of the great image: the head of gold, chest of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay. This image represents human government from the time of Nebuchadnezzar until the return of Jesus.

Consequently, in 2:34–35, "You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." Today, this Stone is the building stone; Christ has become the cornerstone of the church, and the church continues to be built through time. Until one day, when the time is full, Jesus Christ will return with His overcomers—that is the stone cut without hands—to crush all earthly regimes. On whomever that stone falls, it will grind them to powder.

Jesus used a very simple parable to clearly express the past of Israel, the present of the church, and the future realization of the Kingdom of God upon His return. On one hand, we thank God that through the wisdom He has given us for salvation, we have a part in the building of the church. On the other hand, we also ask God to help our relatives, friends, and those to whom we preach the gospel; we pray that God would grant them grace to be humble and to receive His grace.

Let's pray together: Lord, though we are unworthy and unfit, You have shown us grace and given us the wisdom for salvation, allowing us to know Your grace. We especially lift up the relatives and friends we care about into Your hands. You have told us solemnly that this crucified Jesus is salvation to those who believe,

but a stumbling stone to those who do not. Lord, help us so that our lives may be a beautiful testimony, and help those to whom we preach the gospel by giving them soft hearts and humble spirits to recognize that the crucified Christ is our only way of salvation. While there is still time and opportunity, may they soon accept Your salvation. Help my life today to be a good testimony that can help those around me. We pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.