

# The DAILY JESUS NEWS #254

Tuesday... Day of Testing and Teaching

## Jesus Rebukes the Leaders With The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

MT 21.33-46 (Parallel Texts: MK 12.1-12; LK 20.9-19)

33 *“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. (Is. 5.2) Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place.*

34 *When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect <sup>M</sup>some of <sup>MT</sup>the fruit <sup>M</sup>of his vineyard.*

35 *“The tenants seized his servant; <sup>M</sup>beat him and sent him away empty handed. Then he sent another servant to them; they beat this man on the head and treated him shamefully. He sent still another, and they killed this one. 36 He sent many others; some they beat, and others they killed.*

37 <sup>MT</sup> *“Last of all, <sup>M</sup>he had only one left to send to them--<sup>MT</sup>his son, <sup>M</sup>whom he loved. <sup>L</sup>‘Perhaps <sup>MT</sup>they will respect my son,’ he said.*

38 *“But when the tenants saw the son, <sup>L</sup>they talked the matter over with each other, and said, <sup>MT</sup>‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’*

39 *“So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.*

40 *“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”*

41 *“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied.*

<sup>M</sup>*“He will come and kill those tenants <sup>MT</sup>and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”*

<sup>L</sup>When the people heard this, they said, “May this never be!”

42 Jesus said to them, *“Have you never read in the Scriptures:*

*“THE STONE THE BUILDERS REJECTED  
HAS BECOME THE CORNERSTONE;  
THE LORD HAS DONE THIS,  
AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES?”*  
(Ps. 118.22-23)

43 *“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. 44 Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”*

45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. 46 They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = <sup>MT</sup>, Mark = <sup>M</sup>, Luke = <sup>L</sup>, John = <sup>J</sup>, Acts = <sup>A</sup>. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

## The DAILY JESUS NEWS #254

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	The Temple Courts in Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	C. Tuesday: Day of Testing and Teaching
Title	4. Jesus Rebukes the Leaders With the Parable of the Wicked Tenants

### COMMENT:

In today's reading Jesus delivered the second of three consecutive parables to the Jewish leadership. This one described the many chances that God gave the nation to repent, and the consequences of their rejection of him in detail. By the end of this parable, they were sure that Jesus was talking directly to them through these stories. The powerful impact of this particular parable upon them can be seen in their response to Jesus' question part way through the tale:

"He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,' they replied."

The leaders were talking about the people in the parable when they said this. They had not yet realized that they were leveling God's judgement against themselves when they spoke these words that actually applied directly to them. Ironically, this statement was the only time the leaders embraced the truth on this entire day of testing Jesus.

This was the power of Jesus' masterful use of parables. He drew his enemies into the story to the point that they forgot their agenda against him and briefly engaged with the truth.

Jesus began the parable with a reference to Isaiah's parable of Israel as God's vineyard in Isaiah 5. The servants who were sent to receive fruit were the Old Testaments prophets, who were universally rejected in their own day. Many were martyred, as the parable described. Sinful people—including the writer and readers of these words—have a history of rejecting the truth from God that goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

Jesus' description of the Father's sending of his Son was especially poignant in the parable. Both Mark and Luke included the phrase, "his son--whom he loved." This harked back to what the Father said at Jesus' immersion in water, and on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Luke tells us that Jesus added a telling adverb to the final phrase of that section, "perhaps they will respect him." This single sentence is one of the most soul-stirring, heart revealing statements of Jesus' ministry. It is his own description of his Father's heart in giving us his Son.

*37<sup>MT</sup> "Last of all, <sup>M</sup>he had only one left to send to them--<sup>MT</sup>his son, <sup>M</sup>whom he loved.  
<sup>L</sup>'Perhaps <sup>MT</sup>they will respect my son,' he said.*

Jesus warned the Jewish leadership here that their rejection of him would result in losing their central place in the kingdom. This would be given over to the Gentiles in the Church age. He had wept in sorrow over Jerusalem concerning this already. Now he spoke the truth in love to his enemies.

## The DAILY JESUS NEWS #254

However, Jesus knew and believed that the Scriptures prophesied his rejection, and the transition of the kingdom to the Gentiles. He quoted Ps. 118 to that effect. Everything Jesus said and did fulfilled the Scriptures, to make their fulfillment possible for us as well through his grace.

When Jesus was through with this parable everyone knew that he was talking about the leadership. They sought to flee from him as fast as they could, so they could regroup. They had come to question his authority, and found themselves publicly exposed as sinners instead. Before they could slip away Jesus unleashed one more parable upon them. That will be tomorrow's reading.

### APPLICATION:

Jesus' wisdom, love, and truthfulness are so impressive in this scene, and these words. He did come indeed as Messiah to the Temple, to refine and cleanse the priestly order (Mal. 3:1-4) No one could stand up to his refining fire. Yet he offered mercy and grace to any who would believe and receive him. John tells us that there were those among the Pharisees, like Nicodemus, who actually believed in him.

Jesus' example to us here is that love speaks the truth. It does not water down or pervert the truth for selfish gain, or for fear of rejection. Love always rejoices in the truth, and nothing but the truth.

*Do you tend to water down, or sacrifice the truth in your relationships? Love does not lead us to do that. Self-interest does.*

*Is there some relationship in which more of God's love needs to lead you into a more faithful expression of the truth, regardless of the personal consequences?*

*If so, draw strength from Jesus' example here. He will speak the truth in love through you as you trust him to do so. He is the master at doing this.*