

Mark 12:1-12 – The parable of the tenants

In this passage, Jesus is again teaching in the temple. He is warning the leaders of Israel about the coming judgment. He is showing them the terrible thing they are about to do in killing God's Son. The passage also has teaching and warnings for us today.

1. God's Rights

This parable tells a story about Israel, using the picture of a vineyard. The people would understand this story quickly, because it was a well-known picture, from Isaiah chapter 5. In the parable, the vineyard was Israel itself, the owner of the vineyard was God, and the tenants who rented it and should care for it were the leaders of Israel. God was expecting to receive fruits from his vineyard. Instead, the tenants decided that they wanted to be the owners and that they would ignore all the rights of God! Do you realise that in this world you are a tenant, not an owner? Did you know that God has a right to see fruits in your life? The fruits of believing and trusting in Christ, of doing good works, of growing in holiness, and spreading his word to others. We do not have the right to live our own way. When God comes looking for fruits in your life, what will he find?

2. God's Patience

The landlord sent his servants to collect his fruits at the time of harvest. But they were beaten, struck and some were killed. These servants represented the prophets whom God sent to Israel to call them back to obedience (Jeremiah 35:15). God was so very patient with Israel, sending his servants to them again and again. God still sends his servants today, to call us to repent. Psalm 103:8-11 describes God's patience. Sadly many people think that God's patience means that he does not care about sin, or that they do not need to repent. Romans 2:4-5 tells us that these people are storing up more and more wrath against themselves for the future.

3. God's Son

At last, God sent the final messenger – his Son. He has one, well-beloved, eternal Son – Jesus. By telling this parable, Jesus witnessed to Israel again that he was their rightful king. He is not just another prophet. The tenants decided to kill him – just as the leaders of Israel were plotting to kill Jesus. The parable warns us that if we reject Jesus, then there is no more hope for us. God does not have another Son to send. If we do not trust in the Lord Jesus, nothing remains for us except a terrible judgment.

4. God's Triumph

God's patience is very great, but it is not forever. One day he will come. He came upon Israel about forty years after this parable, and destroyed the temple and the nation. But the church of Jesus is still growing in all the world! God's people are like a house, and Jesus is the “corner-stone” which all the weight of the house rests on. The builders (leaders) rejected him, but God gave him the highest place. The same will be true today. God's church will often be rejected by the world, but God will at last bring it to glory. Have you heard and understood this parable?