

Luke 20:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.

Analysis

Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time—Jesus shifts from the hostile leaders to the people, speaking a parable (παραβολήν, *parabolēn*) that will indict the Sanhedrin. The vineyard imagery evokes Isaiah 5:1-7, where God's vineyard is Israel. The "certain man" (ἄνθρωπος τις, *anthrōpos tis*) represents God; the "husbandmen" (γεωργοῖς, *geōrgois*, tenant farmers) represent Israel's religious leaders entrusted with God's people.

The phrase "went into a far country for a long time" (ἀπεδήμησεν χρόνους ἱκανούς, *apedemēsen chronous hikanous*) indicates God's patient forbearance—the owner trusts the tenants and gives them time and freedom to manage the vineyard. This extended absence tests their faithfulness. Will they honor the owner's rights, or will they act as if the vineyard belongs to them? The parable prophetically describes Israel's history: God entrusted His covenant people to leaders who increasingly acted as if they owned rather than stewarded God's inheritance.

Historical Context

Tenant farming was common in first-century Palestine. Wealthy landowners would lease vineyards to tenant farmers who paid rent with a portion of the produce. The arrangement described—an absentee landlord and tenant farmers—was familiar. Isaiah 5:1-7 established vineyard imagery for Israel, making Jesus' allusion

unmistakable to His audience. The parable's trajectory would shock listeners: tenant farmers rejecting the owner's authority was unthinkable, yet it perfectly described Israel's treatment of God's prophets throughout history.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the vineyard imagery connect Jesus' teaching to Israel's prophetic tradition?
2. What does God's "far country" absence teach about His patient forbearance and humanity's stewardship responsibility?
3. In what ways do religious leaders today sometimes act as owners rather than stewards of God's people?

Interlinear Text

Ἦρξατο	δὲ	πρὸς	τὸν	λαὸν	λέγειν	τὴν	παραβολὴν
began he	Then	to	G3588	the people	to speak	G3588	parable
G756	G1161	G4314		G2992	G3004		G3850

ταύτην·	Ἄνθρωπός	τις	ἐφύτευσεν	ἀμπελῶνα	καὶ
G3778	man	A certain	planted	a vineyard	and
	G444	G5100	G5452	G290	G2532

ἐξέδοτο	αὐτὸν	γεωργοῖς	καὶ	ἀπεδήμησεν	χρόνους
forth	it	to husbandmen	and	went into a far country	time
G1554	G846	G1092	G2532	G589	G5550

ἱκανούς
for a long
G2425

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 2:21 (Parallel theme): Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

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