

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" (ἄνθρωπός τις, anthrōpos tis) represents God; the "husbandmen" (γεωργοῖς, geōrgoīs, 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 ἵκανούς, 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

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

ταύτην· Ἀνθρωπός 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

ικανούς
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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