

Mark 12:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

Analysis

A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it—Jesus deliberately echoes Isaiah 5:1-7, where the vineyard (κεράμπελος, kerampelos) symbolizes Israel. The elaborate preparation (hedge, winepress, tower) demonstrates God's covenant investment. **Let it out to husbandmen** (γεωργός, georgos)—tenant farmers who owed the owner a share of harvest. **Went into a far country** establishes God's patience, giving Israel space to bear fruit.

The parable's opening indicts Israel's religious leaders as unfaithful stewards of God's vineyard-kingdom. Every detail recalls Isaiah's love song turned judgment oracle, forcing hearers to recognize themselves as the wicked tenants. This is salvation history condensed: God plants, invests, and waits for fruit from those entrusted with His covenant people.

Historical Context

Written around AD 65-70, Mark records Jesus teaching this parable during Passion Week (after the Triumphal Entry) in direct confrontation with chief priests, scribes, and elders (11:27-33). Vineyard imagery was deeply rooted in Israel's self-understanding through Isaiah 5, while tenant farming was common in first-century

Palestine under absentee landlords. The religious leaders would immediately recognize the Isaiah 5 allusion.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the vineyard owner's lavish preparation expose the depth of Israel's ingratitude and rebellion against covenant grace?
2. In what ways are you tempted to treat God's kingdom work as your own possession rather than a stewardship entrusted to you?
3. How does this parable challenge those who assume religious privilege guarantees spiritual fruitfulness?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἦρξατο αὐτὸν ἐν παραβολαῖς λέγειν, Ἀμπελῶνα

And he began it by parables to speak a vineyard

G2532 G756 G846 G1722 G3850 G3004 G290

ἐφύτευσεν ἄνθρωπος καὶ περιέθηκεν φραγμὸν καὶ

planted A certain man And set an hedge about And

G5452 G444 G2532 G4060 G5418 G2532

ἄρυξεν ὑπολήνιον καὶ ὠκοδόμησεν πύργον καὶ

digged a place for the winefat And built a tower And

G3736 G5276 G2532 G3618 G4444 G2532

ἐξέδοτο αὐτὸν γεωργοῖς καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν

let it to husbandmen And went into a far country

G1554 G846 G1092 G2532 G589

Additional Cross-References

Mark 13:34 (Parallel theme): For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

Mark 4:2 (Parallel theme): And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

Matthew 25:14 (Parallel theme): For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

Acts 7:38 (Parallel theme): This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: