

Matthew 21:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

Analysis

When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?—Jesus makes His hearers pronounce judgment on themselves. ὅταν οὖν ἔλθῃ ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος (hotan oun elthē ho kyrios tou ampelōnos) —'when therefore the lord of the vineyard comes'—assumes certain return and reckoning.

The question forces application: τί ποιήσει τοῖς γεωργοῖς ἐκείνοις (ti poiēsei tois geōrgois ekeinois)—'what will he do to those farmers?' By making them answer, Jesus implicates them in their own condemnation. They cannot claim ignorance or injustice—their own mouths will testify that judgment is deserved. This rhetorical technique exposes conscience while teaching truth.

Historical Context

Parables functioned as prophetic traps. Nathan used this technique with David (2 Sam 12:1-7)—telling a story that made David pronounce judgment on himself. Jesus's hearers understood the vineyard represented Israel (Isa 5:7), yet still answered truthfully, condemning themselves.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does the certainty of the owner's return ('when', not 'if') teach about Christ's second coming and accountability?
2. How might God be using your own judgment of others' sin to expose identical patterns in your heart (Rom 2:1)?

Interlinear Text

ὅταν	οὖν	ἔλθῃ	ὁ	κύριος	τοῦ	ἀμπελῶνος	τί
When	therefore	cometh	G3588	the lord	G3588	of the vineyard	what
G3752	G3767	G2064		G2962		G290	G5101
ποιήσῃ	τοῖς	γεωργοῖς	ἐκείνοις				
will he do	G3588	husbandmen	unto those				
G4160		G1092	G1565				

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 10:29 (Parallel theme): Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Mark 12:9 (References Lord): What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.