

### **MINISTERING TO SPIRITUALLY DECLINING NATION (part one)**

I have entitled this series of studies, Ministering to a Spiritually Declining Nation.

**This first lesson will study four aspects of Jesus' Ministry to the Spiritually Declining Priest-Nation of Israel through the Parable of Tenants.**

This parable is recorded also in (Mark 12:1-12) and (Luke 20:9-19).

#### **1. The Parable of Tenants was not addressed to the people of Israel, but rather at the apostate Pharisaical leadership. (Luke 20:9; Matt.21:45)**

It was part of the Temple Discourse given three days before His crucifixion (Matt.21:33-23:39).

This parable was one of three parables given in rebuttal of the Pharisee's challenge of the Divine Authority of Jesus (Matt.21:12-17). All three parables have the same doctrinal theme.

The Divine Agency of Priest-Nation failed in their custodianship of Shadow Christology, the Word of God, and Evangelism under the leadership of Pharisaical Judaism to the degree that they were now under the 4<sup>th</sup> cycle of Divine Discipline.

#### **2. A biblical parable has one doctrinal point. Do not get distracted by the many characters in the parable. They were used to give human drama to the parable.**

In a biblical parable, the listener must figure out the ONE doctrinal point given by using common everyday cultural illustrations. Except in this parable, Jesus gave the answer.

Matthew tells us why Jesus taught Jesus in parable in (Matt.13:34-35). It was used as another sign to Israel of the Messiah (1 Cor.1:22; Ps.78:2).

The Old Covenant Scripture for this parable of the Vineyard came from (Isa.5:1-7). Jesus also will use (Isa.5) as the Scriptural background for the Seven Woes of (Matt.23:13-39).

This parable is connected to the controversy resulting from Jesus' cleansing of the temple (Matt.21:12-17, 23-27). "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?" (21:23b)

#### **3. In the Parable of the Tenants, we will explain the characters used in this parable (Matt.21:33-46) to understand the one doctrinal point.**

There are four major characters in this parable. We will identify each of them looking for the doctrinal point.

- **Landowner of vineyard** (Matt.21:33a)
  - God – Divine Security system of protection (why?) the answer is in the doctrinal point
- **Tenants of vineyard** (Matt.21:33b)
  - The Divine Agency of the Priest-Nation of Israel during the Jewish Age.

- **Servants of the landowner** (Matt.21:34-36)
  - A pivot of spiritually mature believers of the Divine Agency faithfully serving God. In our parable these are the collectors of the harvest for God:
    - The Land Owner (God) sent several groups
    - All experienced evil treatment (men-de sequence/ 35)
    - By those who had no respect for law, the existence of the contract or for one's life!
  
- **Son of the landowner** (Matt.21:37-39)
  - Jesus Christ in first advent.
    - **Last of all** (eschatos/ Mark 12:6)
    - Heir of vineyard and inheritance of the landowner
    - Collector of the harvest
      - The Land Owner's thought – "They will respect My Son"
      - But they killed Him and threw Him out of the vineyard to seize His inheritance – pre-meditated, malice of forethought – overlooked the importance of the Sovereignty of God.

**4. Four important features are found in the conclusion of this parable helping us to arrive at the One Doctrinal Point (Matt.21:40-46).**

In the conclusion of this parable, Jesus asked a question, waited for an answer, gave the correct doctrinal answer, and got an immediate response.

- **1 st -His question:** "Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will He do to those vine-growers?" (Matt.21:40)
  
- **2 nd - Chief priest and Pharisees answer:** (Matt.21:45). "They said to Him,
  - 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,
  - and will rent out the vineyard to others vine-growers
  - who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons.'" (Matt.21:41)
    - The Law fits the punishment to the crime. This is not true with God's Grace and Mercy (John 8:1-11).
  
- **3 rd – Jesus' doctrinal answer is given after His reading of (Ps.118:22-23) in (Matt.21:42):**
  - "Therefore I say to you,
    - the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.
    - And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."
    - (Matt.21:43-44) **Messianic Hosanna of Passover** (Matt.21:6, 9, 15)
      - Their answer was self-incriminating.
  
  - The Priest-Nation of Israel's rejection of the 'stone' (Jesus being sent by God, The Messiah) would soon see Him become the Chief Cornerstone of the Church (Acts 4:10-12; Eph.2:19-22; 1 Pet.2:4-8).
  
  - The Chief Cornerstone is set with lines that extend at 90° angles, to which all other lines must conform if building is to be completed perfectly.
  
- **4<sup>th</sup> - Their immediate response to the doctrinal point:**
  - "When the **chief priest and the Pharisees** heard His parable,
    - they understood that He was speaking about them.
    - When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people,
    - because they considered Him to be a prophet." (Matt.21:45-46)