**The Stone Rejected**

Based on [Matthew 21:33-46](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt21.33-46)

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In today’s parable, Jesus tells of how God has taken away his kingdom from the nation of Israel, and given it to all people who believe in Jesus Christ for their salvation. The parable is really an outline of salvation history. A master of a house planted a vineyard, did everything to prepare it to bear a harvest. He then left for a while, but employed tenants to look after the house and tend the vineyard. The master sent servants to collect some fruit from the vineyard, but the tenants beat them and sent them away. Finally the master sent his own Son, and the tenants conspired against him, took him out of the vineyard and killed him.

This is a very transparent parable. God established a vineyard when he chose the Israelites to be his people and give them the promised land. **The vineyard was supposed to produce fruit--that is it was supposed to produce what God planted it for, repentance, Good works, praise and glory to his name, a light shining in the wilderness of the world.**

In planting this vineyard, God did everything right to prepare it for success. **He gave Israel his Laws and Commandments, he gave them a temple to worship Him, he gave them priests and leaders to tend the vineyard so that it would produce fruit.**

He expects faith that produces Good Works, patience, kindness, self-control, piety and Thanksgiving to God every day for all his benefits. It is ironic that today, even the ungodly celebrate Thanksgiving? **Who are they giving thanks to?** God has provided an abundance of the fruits of the earth that he gives to the righteous and unrighteous alike. It makes sense that farmers and country folk are generally more religious, even if not Christian. It is because they are closer to the land, where God gives us our daily bread. Good works are what we owe god, to lead lives in ceaseless prayer and thanksgiving to Him, giving him glory and cheerfully obeying his commands.

The vineyard of Israel was well prepared. God had given them so much, rescued them repeatedly from destruction and given them everything they needed to be a holy nation set apart in the world as a light unto the nations. **There is every reason for God to expect it to bear fruit. And so--the parable continues--God sent servants to collect the fruit**. These are the prophets of the Old Testament. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc. But especially culminating in John the Baptist. John, when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism he said, “Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.”

The prophets are those who were sent to find faith in Israel and obedience from his people. And when the people was found to be unfaithful—which they almost always were—rebuke them and call them to repentance.

To God, our heavenly father, repentance is the most celebrated fruit of his vineyard. Jesus says there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 who have no need of repentance. Repentance is admitting your sin, renouncing it, and turning to God for forgiveness and mercy. **And this is not only admitting you’re a sinner and asking forgiveness.** I doubt you’ll find a person, Christian or not, who won’t admit to being capable of making mistakes or having done wrong generally. That’s not proof of repentance or the fruit of it.

True repentance is seen when you are confronted by God’s Word, rebuked for specific sins and admit your fault and ask forgiveness. **David, after he had an adulterous affair with Bathsheeba, and had her husband killed to cover it up—was confronted and rebuked by the prophet Nathan.** And David immediately said, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And the angels in heaven rejoiced, and God, through the prophet Nathan, forgave David his sin. In reflection about this David writes in Psalm 51: [**17**](http://biblehub.com/psalms/51-17.htm)The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

That’s how repentance is supposed to work. It involves confrontation which is dangerous. When the servants come to collect fruit, they are coming to confront the tenants. **So the prophets came to confront the unfaithful shepherds and kings of Israel**. The parable says that some were beaten, some killed, some stoned. This is how the prophets were rewarded. Jesus says, “O Jerusalem Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God’s messengers.” He says,

 **29**“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous,**30**saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ **31**Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. **32**Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. **33**You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?**34**Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, **35**so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah,[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+23&version=ESV#fen-ESV-23950f)] whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. **36**Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Killing and stoning, that’s the proper punishment for blasphemy, and that’s the tragic irony of it all. The true prophets came and they are stoned for blasphemy.

Once the tenants have beaten the servants away, the Parable continues, “**Finally he sent his son to them saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come let us kill him and take his inheritance. And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him**.”

This is obviously Jesus referring to himself, and his reception in Israel. John writes, “He came to his own, but his own did not receive him.” Jesus was rejected, and here’s something we need to realize, those who rejected him knew who he was—the very Son of God. “**This is the heir. Come let us kill him and have his inheritance**.” There is no mistaking it, those who reject Jesus Christ do so, not because they don’t know who he is, but because they do. And the tragic irony continues, God who sends his own son so that he would be accepted is for that very reason rejected by men.

This tragic irony does not end in tragedy. God “catches the wise in his own craftiness.” “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” **In their killing of the Son of God, Israel forfeit its claim through Abraham to be the God’s people.** So John the Baptist says, “Do presume to say, “we have Abraham as our father”, for I say God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.” These stones. God has laid a cornerstone, not upon the law of Moses, but on the righteousness of Jesus Christ, upon which we are being built up like living stones into a spiritual house.

There are Christian Zionists today, many televangelists, who teach that Israel is still God’s people and God has promises left to fulfill for them. **It is amazing how they can interpret from the bible four blood moons, and numeric symbols that predict the day of Jesus return--and yet they somehow miss the fact that Jesus says, that the kingdom of God has been taken away from the nation of Israel and given to a people producing its fruits.** That is, the church, those who repent of their sins and believe in the salvation won by Jesus Christ who died for our sins and was raised for our justification.