

The Parable of the Two Sons... The Parable of the Vineyard Owner

Here is a **Full Breakdown** combining:

-  **Matthew 21:28–32 — The Parable of the Two Sons**
-  **Matthew 21:33–46,  Mark 12:1–12,  Luke 20:9–19 — The Parable of the Vineyard Owner (Wicked Tenants)**

Both parables are told **back-to-back** during **Passion Week** (likely Tuesday) in the **Temple courts**, where Jesus confronts the **chief priests, elders, and Pharisees**.



Combined Overview: Two Parables of Judgment

Parable	Passage(s)	Core Theme	Audience Targeted
Two Sons	MT 21:28–32	Obedience vs hypocrisy	Religious leaders (direct)
Wicked Tenants	MT 21:33–46, MK 12:1–12, LK 20:9–19	Rejection of God's messengers (including the Son)	Religious leaders (direct + prophetic)

Together, these two parables expose the **failure of Israel's leaders**, their **rejection of Jesus**, and God's plan to **give the Kingdom to others**—those who believe, repent, and bear fruit.



Historical and Narrative Context

- These parables are set **during Passion Week**, just after Jesus' triumphal entry and His cleansing of the Temple.
- The **chief priests and elders** questioned Jesus' authority (Mt 21:23), prompting Him to respond with these two parables.
- Both parables reflect the **prophetic tone of judgment**, echoing Isaiah, Jeremiah, and especially **Isaiah 5** (the Vineyard Song).



Parable Breakdown: Comparison Chart

Element	Parable of the Two Sons	Parable of the Vineyard Owner
 Location	Only in Matthew (21:28–32)	MT 21:33–46, MK 12:1–12, LK 20:9–19
 Characters	Father, Two Sons	Landowner, Tenants, Servants, Son
 Setting	Vineyard	Vineyard (Isaiah 5 imagery)
 Sin	Lip service without obedience	Rejection and murder of God's messengers
 Target	Hypocritical leaders	Religious elite who rejected the prophets and Jesus
 OT Echoes	Jonah, rebellious Israel	Isaiah 5, Israel's history of prophet-killing
 Judgment	Kingdom given to obedient (even sinners)	Tenants destroyed; vineyard given to others
 Jesus' Identity	Implied authority as judge of hearts	Explicitly the "beloved son" sent and killed
 Climax	"Tax collectors and prostitutes go in before you."	"The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."

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 **MT 21:33–46**,  **MK 12:1–12**,  **LK 20:9–19**

The Parable of the Vineyard Owner (Wicked Tenants)

Summary

Jesus tells of a landowner who planted a vineyard (symbolizing **Israel**) and entrusted it to tenants (the **leaders of Israel**). When the landowner sent servants (the **prophets**) to collect fruit, they were beaten and killed. Finally, the landowner sent his **beloved son** (a clear picture of **Jesus**), whom the tenants also killed. Jesus concludes with judgment: the owner will destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to **others** (symbolizing the **Gentiles**, the **faithful**, or the **Church**).

Isaiah 5 Allusion

Jesus **mirrors** **Isaiah 5:1–7**, where Israel is depicted as God's vineyard, but instead of producing good fruit, it yields **wild grapes**. In both, judgment follows.

Greek Highlights

- **γεωργοῖς (geōrgois)** – “tenant farmers”: These were not owners but **stewards**, responsible to the landowner. Their betrayal represents **leaders who misused their spiritual authority**.
- **ἀπέκτειναν (apekteinan)** – “they killed [him]”: Used repeatedly, highlighting escalating **violence** toward God's messengers.
- **ἀγαπητός (agapētos)** – “beloved” son: This same term is used at Jesus' **baptism and transfiguration**, reinforcing His divine identity (cf. Mk 1:11, 9:7).
- **λίθος ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν** – “the stone the builders rejected...” (Ps 118:22): A **messianic prophecy**. What was discarded becomes foundational.

Messianic and Eschatological Themes

Theme	Explanation
Jesus as the Beloved Son	Direct identification with the heir in the parable.
Prophetic Tradition	The servants = the prophets; consistent rejection throughout OT history.
Judgment & Transfer	The “vineyard” (Kingdom) is taken from unfaithful leaders and given to new people.
Cornerstone Prophecy	Jesus, rejected by the builders (leaders), becomes central to God's plan.
Foreshadowing the Cross	Jesus predicts His own death at the hands of these leaders.

Reaction from the Leaders

- The **chief priests and Pharisees** understood the parable was **about them** (MT 21:45).
- They wanted to arrest Jesus **immediately** but feared the crowds (MT 21:46).
- Luke adds that Jesus “**looked directly at them**” (LK 20:17) as He delivered this **piercing rebuke**.

The Parable of the Two Sons... The Parable of the Vineyard Owner



Application and Reflection

- God **seeks fruit** from His vineyard. Do our lives bear it?
- **Stewardship matters**—God entrusts spiritual responsibilities, but expects accountability.
- **Rejecting Christ** brings judgment; **accepting Him** brings cornerstone-level transformation.
- **Religious position** means nothing without **obedient response** to the Son.
- **The Kingdom is open** to those who respond—Jew or Gentile, clean or unclean, broken or whole.



“The Stone the Builders Rejected...” (Psalm 118:22)

Passage	Quoted in
MT 21:42	“This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous...”
MK 12:10	Irony of builders rejecting their own cornerstone
LK 20:17	Explicit connection to judgment
Acts 4:11	Peter applies this to Jesus after the resurrection
1 Peter 2:7	The cornerstone is precious to believers, offensive to unbelievers



Final Summary Chart

Element	Two Sons	Wicked Tenants
Vineyard?	Implied	Explicit (Isaiah 5)
God’s Expectation	Obedience	Fruit and respect
Failure	Lip-service	Rebellion and murder
Key Reversal	Sinners welcomed first	Kingdom given to others
Son’s Role	Not directly mentioned	Explicitly the Son of the Owner
Fulfillment	Repentant hearts	Death of Jesus foretold
Target	Hypocrites	Violent rejecters of Jesus

The Parable of the Two Sons... The Parable of the Vineyard Owner

The specific things the **landowner did to the vineyard** in the parable (MT 21:33; MK 12:1; LK 20:9) are **highly significant**, both **symbolically** and **biblically**. Jesus is drawing directly from **Isaiah 5:1–7**, known as “**The Song of the Vineyard**”, a prophetic judgment oracle against Israel. Every detail in the parable is loaded with meaning.



Parable Description (Matthew 21:33 / Mark 12:1)

“There was a landowner who **planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower**. Then he leased it to **tenants** and went away.”

Let's break down each element:



1. “Planted a vineyard”

➤ Meaning:

- The **vineyard** is **Israel**, God's chosen people (Isaiah 5:7).
- Planting indicates **intentional design, investment, and love**. This is a **covenant relationship**.
 - ◆ “*The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the nation of Israel...*” (Isaiah 5:7)



2. “Put a fence around it” (Greek: φραγμὸν)

➤ Meaning:

- A **hedge** or **stone wall** for protection from animals, thieves, or invaders.
- Spiritually, it represents God's **laws, boundaries, and divine protection**.
- Israel was “fenced off” from other nations, **set apart** as holy (cf. Leviticus 20:26).
 - 👉 This shows that God didn't just plant the vineyard — He **guarded it**, showing His **care and covenant responsibility**.



3. “Dug a winepress” (Greek: ληνόν)

➤ Meaning:

- A **winepress** is for processing the harvest — transforming grapes into wine.
- Symbolizes God's **expectation of fruit** (justice, righteousness).
- In Isaiah 5:2, the Lord also dug a winepress, but the vineyard produced **wild grapes**.
 - 👉 The winepress represents God's desire for a **fruitful people**, not just *any* fruit, but **quality spiritual fruit**.



4. “Built a watchtower” (Greek: πύργον)

➤ Meaning:

- A **tower** was used to **oversee** the vineyard, guard against enemies, and store tools or produce.
- Spiritually, it represents **watchfulness, prophetic oversight, and God's continual presence and vigilance**.
- In Isaiah and other prophetic books, towers can symbolize **God's watchmen** or prophets (cf. Ezekiel 3:17).
 - 👉 The tower indicates that the vineyard wasn't abandoned. It had **oversight**—a place to watch over and care for it.

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All Together: Divine Investment and Expectation

Feature	Practical Use	Spiritual Meaning
Vineyard planted	Life, cultivation	Israel, God's covenant people
Fence/Hedge	Protection	God's law and holiness
Winepress	Harvest fruit	Justice, righteousness
Watchtower	Oversight, defense	Prophets, God's presence



Implication in the Parable

Jesus uses this detailed setup to **emphasize God's generosity, protection, and expectation** for Israel. It shows that:

1. **God did everything necessary** to enable fruitfulness.
2. The **problem wasn't with the vineyard**, but with the **tenants** — the **leaders** who rejected God's messengers and ultimately His Son.
3. The leaders had **no excuse**. The vineyard was fully equipped.



Echoes of Judgment (Isaiah 5:1–7)

"What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it?" (Isaiah 5:4)

This verse matches perfectly with Jesus' implication:

- God did **everything possible** for Israel.
- The leaders **failed in their stewardship**.
- Therefore, **judgment is coming**, and the **Kingdom will be transferred** (Matthew 21:43).
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Final Reflection

This imagery reminds us:

- God's **blessings come with responsibility**.
- When God **invests** in people or leaders, He expects a **return**—faithfulness, fruit, and righteousness.
- **Rejecting the Son**, after receiving every opportunity to bear fruit, is the **ultimate offense**.

The Parable of the Two Sons... The Parable of the Vineyard Owner

This is one of the clearest examples of Jesus deliberately echoing an Old Testament parable.

Below is a **side-by-side chart** showing **Isaiah 5:1–7** and **Jesus' Parable of the Vineyard Owner** (found in **Matthew 21:33–46**  | **Mark 12:1–12**  | **Luke 20:9–19** 

The Vineyard Parable Comparison

Isaiah 5:1–7 “The Song of the Vineyard”	Matthew 21:33–46  / Mark 12:1–12  / Luke 20:9–19  “The Parable of the Wicked Tenants”
v. 1 – “My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.”	v. 33  / v. 1  / v. 9  – “A man planted a vineyard, put a wall around it, dug a winepress, and built a tower.”
v. 2 – “He dug it all around, removed its stones, and planted it with choice vines; He built a tower in its midst and hewed out a wine vat.”	Same imagery — Jesus intentionally repeats Isaiah’s details: wall, winepress, and tower. These symbolize God’s care and protection for Israel.
v. 2b – “Then He expected it to produce good grapes, but it produced only worthless ones.”	v. 34–35  / v. 2–3  / v. 10  – The owner expects fruit but receives none; instead, the tenants beat and kill the servants (the prophets).
v. 3–4 – “Judge between Me and My vineyard... What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done?”	v. 36–37  / v. 4–6  / v. 11–13  – The owner sends more servants, then finally his beloved son, asking, “What shall I do?” The echo: God has done all, but His people reject Him.
v. 5–6 – “I will remove its hedge, it will be burned; I will break down its wall, it will be trampled.”	v. 41  / v. 9  / v. 16  – “He will destroy those wicked tenants and give the vineyard to others.” (Judgment upon Israel’s leaders; vineyard given to the faithful.)
v. 7 – “The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel... He looked for justice (מִשְׁפָט mishpat) but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness (צְדָקָה tsedaqah) but behold, a cry of distress.”	v. 42–43  / v. 10–11  / v. 17  – Jesus cites Psalm 118:22 (“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone”), identifying Himself as the rejected Son. Judgment falls on unfaithful leaders; the Kingdom is given to a people producing its fruit.