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**Sabbath School.**

**BIBLE LESSONS.**

**Fourth Quarter.**

**STUDIES IN LUKES GOSPEL.**

Lesson I. October 5. Luke 20: 9-19.

**PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD.**

**GOLDEN TEXT.**

"He is despised and rejected of men."—Isa. 53: 3.

**EXPLANATORY.**

I. God's SPIRITUAL VINEYARD. 9. Then began He to speak to the people. Because the scribes and elders rejected Him. He had silenced but not convinced them. See ver. 1-8. His only hope of making an impression now was with the people, and perhaps through them on the rulers.

The HUSBANDMAN. A certain man. Called in Matthew a householder, a landlord, proprietor, owner of an estate. This householder represents God who is the creator and owner of all things. He owns this world. He owns the church, for He planted it and cultured it; all its life is from Him; all its powers and blessings are His gift. He owns all that we as individuals use and enjoy.

The VINEYARD. Planted a vineyard. The image of the kingdom of God as a vineyard or as a vineyard runs through the whole Old Testament (Deut. 32: 32; Jer. 2: 21; Ezek. 15: 1-6; 19: 10). No doubt our Lord here takes up the prophesy there, the more willingly building on the old foundations, that His adversaries accused Him of destroying the Law. We must think of Palestine as, from the remotest period, a land of vineyards. The slopes of the Judean hills have been the paradise of grapes from the days of Noah until the present time.

The HUSBANDMEN. And let it forth to husbandmen. It is customary in the East, as in Ireland and in other parts of Europe, for the owner to let out his estate to husbandmen, i. e. to tenants, who pay him an annual rent, either in money or, as apparently in this case, in kind. The husbandmen represent the rulers of the Jews (ver. 12); but the people as a whole, a nation or a church, are included (Matt. 21: 43).

The ABSENCE OF THE HUSBANDMEN. And went into a far country: rather, as in the Rev. Ver. another country. He went abroad. He left his tenants in charge with everything needful for their work, and thus by his absence tested their faithfulness, and gave them opportunity to develop their characters, and fulfill their duties. For a long time: thus giving abundant opportunity. Going to another country represents the fact that the special manifestations of God in miracles and revelation, as in the time of Moses and the prophets, had not been made for a long time. God seems to be away so as to test the obedience and faithfulness of His children. "He stands aloof to give us room to grow."

The FRUIT EXPECTED FROM THE VINEYARD. 10. And at the season he sent. At the time when the fruit was ripe, when he would naturally expect to receive the products of his vineyard. Give him of the fruit. The householder's share, as his stipulated rent for the use of the vineyard. The season of fruit with us is the time when God has a right to expect us to believe in Jesus; when good works are rightfully required, more and larger and more perfect as we go on in the Christian life; when there are special opportunities for serving God and man, special trials, special calls, seasons of revival.

II. THE FRUITS REQUIRED AND REFUSED. 10. He sent a servant to the husbandmen. The servants, that is, the prophets, and other more eminent ministers of God, were sent, being raised up at particular times, having particular missions. The patience of the householder is thus brought out and magnified, that it may set forth the yet more wonderful forbearance and long suffering of God. But the husbandmen beat him. A verb which strictly means to flay or skin, but is secondarily applied to the severest kind of scourging. And sent him away empty: that is, without the fruits of which he was sent. The behavior of these husbandmen is only a picture of the way in which men still treat God's messengers of mercy—the Holy Spirit, the Bible, the influences of religion.

11. And again he sent another. The gradual growth of the outrage is clearly traced. (1) The first servant they "caught, beat, and sent away empty;" (2) at the second they "cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled;" (3) the third, "they killed."

12. And again (with marvelous patience and unconquerable love) he sent a third. Mark adds, "and many others." The prophets sent to the Jews were many. The messengers of God to us are many. "REJECTING GOD'S MESSENGERS." The Jews rejected the prophets for the same reason that men now reject the Bible and the invitations of God. They did not believe in Him as the wisest and best ruler. They were tempted to seek their pleasure and their good in wrong ways, and were unwilling to have their actions denounced, or their conscience awakened.

III. GOD'S CROWNING WORK FOR US. 13. What shall we do? All that the wisdom and love of God could conceive was brought to answer this question. The answer was, "Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God." I will send My beloved Son. God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3: 16). It may be they will reverence Him. This is what he naturally had a right to expect.

influence or power by which men can be drawn to God which is not found in Jesus Christ.

14. They reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir. Christ is the heir of all things (Heb. 1: 2). The whole world is His inheritance, and will become His in reality when all the kingdoms of earth become His kingdom, and all hearts accept Him as King.

15. So they cast Him out of the vineyard. The act of casting out denotes the whole rejection of our Lord, but perhaps with an allusion to the literal fact of His suffering without the holy city (Heb. 13: 11-13). So also He was delivered over to the Romans, who belonged outside of the vineyard. And killed him: as the Jews did Jesus. They killed him that they might possess: and because they killed him.

16. He shall come and destroy these husbandmen. There was nothing else to do. In Matthew these words are put into the mouth of the hearers, who thus unconsciously condemn themselves. And shall give the vineyard to others. "The others" were the Christian church, the new kingdom of heaven, which took the place of the Jewish nation, after the destruction of Jerusalem. See Acts 13: 46. Every one who believes in Jesus becomes a child of Abraham and an inheritor of the promises (Gal. 3: 7, 9, 29). And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. No other English phrase could well be substituted for this, but it is not remembering that the name of God does not appear in the original, and that the exclamation is simply, as it were, a negative Amen, "So be it not."

The cry of horror must be supposed to have come from others than those who, in St. Matthew's report, had themselves pronounced the sentence. If we reject Christ for this world, we are lost for this world. Those who reject Christ from their lives and plans, in order that they may keep possession of themselves, their pleasures, and hopes, have taken the shortest and surest way to lose them.

17. And He beheld them. Looked earnestly and intently. "The Greek verb implies the gaze turned and fixed on its object." This was in solemn sadness, to express His feelings in view of what they had done, and to impress upon them the truth He was about to speak. What is this then that is written? Referring them to Ps. 118: 22, 23, a psalm which the Jews applied to the Messiah. Peter twice applied it to Him (Acts 4: 11; 1 Pet. 2: 7). The hosannas and praises on the day of His triumphal entry were taken from the same psalm. The stone. The stone is the whole kingdom and power of the Messiah summed up in Himself. Which the builders rejected. The builders answer to the husbandmen: they were appointed of God to carry out the spiritual building, as these to cultivate the spiritual vineyard. The rejection of the chief corner stone answers exactly to the denying and murdering of the Christ. The same is become the head of the corner. Referring next to the point or coping of the wall, but to the corner stone, laid at the foundation, binding together the two walls; on it the whole superstructure, in a measure, rests. There are four cornerstones, but in large buildings one generally laid with ceremony, as the first step in the true structure of the edifice. Christ is declared elsewhere in the New Testament to be the corner stone of His church.

18. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone. Whosoever stumbles at Jesus in His humiliation and rejects His claims, failing to see in Him their Messiah and Saviour. Shall be broken. Shall suffer great injury, and yet it may not be utter destruction, for it is still possible to repent and be saved. Even after the Jews had crucified Jesus, there were forty years given them in which yet to receive Him as their Messiah, and escape the final doom of the nation. But on whomsoever it shall fall. When Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God, and the people still rejected Him, resisting the latest and greatest offers of grace, cost, and the time had come when the destruction could no longer be delayed; then that falling stone would grind him to powder: bring complete and irreparable destruction. This was exactly fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem.

**Livingstone as a Teacher.**

Mr. H. Stanley bears this remarkable testimony to the character of Dr. Livingstone: "I have been in Africa seventeen years, and have never met a man that would kill me if I folded my hands. What has been wanted, and what I have been endeavoring to ask for the poor Africans over these four months that I was with him, have been the good offices of Christians. In 1871 I went to him as prejudiced as the biggest atheist in London. To a reporter and correspondent, such as I, who had only to deal with wars, massacres, and police gatherings, sentimental matters were entirely out of my province. But there came for me a long time for reflection. I was out there away from a worldly world. I saw this solitary old man there, and asked myself, 'How on earth does he stay here?' In his cracked coat? What is it that inspires him? For months after we met I simply found myself listening to him, wondering at the old man carrying out all that was said in the Bible. Leaving all things and follow Me! But little by little he drew me to him. How joyful he would have been if he could have seen what has since happened there."

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**Trust in Trouble.**

It is remarkable that while so many promises are made in the Bible to those who are in trouble, so few comparatively trust in them, if we may judge from the actions of mankind. Would dependency and self-destruction be so frequent among us if men sincerely trusted in the Word of God? "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee," are the words of God, and they are certainly true. So also, "I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him." It is possible for a man to be very despondent who has taken such promises to his heart? Men trust in riches, lose their property, become worried and perplexed, lose their reason, and resort to suicide. A sincere and perfect trust in Providence will prevent this, driving all dependency from the heart and making prayer a delight. To all those who put their trust in Him God says: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way thou shalt go; I will guide thee by Mine eye." It is a simple thing to trust in God, and to realize that He is always present to help the disconsolate and the depressed; but it brings a soul to a condition where peace and comfort can only be found. The real Christian is always calm and happy. He knows that whatever befalls him his heavenly Father is at his side, working out for him a future of peace and happiness. Who then will not believe in the promises of God and trust in the assurances of His holy Word?—Religious Herald.

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