



“The *Megillah* of Matthew”

21:33-22:14

Continuing in chapter 21, we begin tonight with verse 33, the first verse of a parable which is usually called the Parable of the Vineyard. But before we do that, let's review the last few days and where we are today with regard to Yeshua's last days. Thus far, we have postulated that Yeshua arrived in Bethany on Friday afternoon, Nisan 9, 30 CE. He most likely had an *erev-Shabbat* meal with Lazarus and his sisters and then He and His disciples spent the night there. The next morning, *Shabbat*, Nisan 10, He travelled to Jerusalem and made His triumphal entry into the city on a donkey's colt. According to Mark 11, He entered the Temple and only looked around because it was late. He returned to Bethany to spend Saturday night. The next morning, Sunday, Nisan 11, Yeshua, again according to Mark 11, returned to Jerusalem. On His way, He cursed a fig tree on the Mount of Olives and then entered the Temple and confronted and drove out the merchants. That is where He is and we are now in Matthew chapter 21. Yeshua is in Jerusalem in the Temple on Sunday, the second day of His examination as the Lamb of G-d. As we begin the Parable of the Vineyard, Yeshua talking with the *kohenim* and elders of the people.

33 “Listen to another parable. There was a master of a household who planted a vineyard. He put a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a tower. Then He leased it to some tenant farmers and went on a journey” (Matthew 21:33 TLV). We notice that the master of this household was a businessman. He made an investment in a vineyard seeking a return on his money. Picture a vineyard of parallel rows of grape vines, possibly on a hillside. It has a very thickly planted hedge surrounding it serving as a fence to primarily keep marauding animals out. Or the hedge could be a fence made of stones. But before any of this could be done, the stones had to be removed from the land in order to make the land ready to receive grapevines. The stones did not go to waste and were used to build the watchtower which you also see in this picture. A watchtower was also a necessity.

The *migdal*, the watchtower, was required to watch for marauding animals which could destroy the crop or thieves who would steal the crop. A very famous watchtower was the one called *Migdal Eder*, Tower of the Flock, just outside of Bethlehem toward Jerusalem. This flock of sheep is said to have been lambs raised to serve as Temple sacrifices and the watchtower would have been used to protect them from wolves and bears and also thieves. Mentioned in Micah 4:8, it was the place very near to where Yeshua was born and it's very likely that the shepherds who came to worship Him would have been from there. There are even watchtowers in modern Israel. *Ein Gev*, a *kibbutz* on the east side of the Sea of Galilee is at the foot of the Golan Heights. Before 1967 and the capture of the Golan Heights, *Ein Gev's* watchtower, one very much like this one, protected the *kibbutz* from sneak attacks of the Syrians on the hills.

Another necessity for the vineyard was a winepress. In order to provide the end product, the wine, a winepress was very necessary. This whole operation was a considerable investment for the master and also a considerable task, a lot of work. It wouldn't have

happened quickly and may have taken several years. It required considerable planning by the master who intended it to be a major source of income for him while he was away.

*34 Now when fruit season drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. 35 But grabbing his servants, the tenants beat up one, killed another, and stoned still another. 36 Again the master sent other servants, even more than the first, and they did the same thing to them (Matthew 21:34-36 TLV).* Apparently the Master was not in a position to return and sent his servants. It is also clear that the tenants, the ones to whom the Master had leased his vineyard, were not afraid of any kind of retribution or punishment for their actions.

*37 Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 "But when the tenants saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir! Come on, let's kill him and get his inheritance!' 39 So grabbing him, they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him (Matthew 21:37-39 TLV).* These tenants were out of control and they progressed from beatings to murder. Also in this parable, Yeshua prophesied His own death, the death of the son of the master.

*40 Therefore when the master of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 "He will bring those miserable men to a miserable end," they said to Him, "and will lease the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the fruits in their seasons" (Matthew 21:40-41 TLV).* The *kohanim* and elders understood the plain meaning of the parable. Answering Yeshua's question, they said: "He will bring those miserable men to a miserable end and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him his share of the fruits." At this point, they had not caught on that Yeshua was talking about them.

The Master is ADONAI and His vineyard is Israel. He carefully constructed His chosen people, His vineyard, over thousands of years. The tenants are the *kohanim* and other leaders of Israel who rejected ADONAI's rulership and guidance which He sent year after year by His servants, the prophets. They sought to control the fruit of the vineyard, the people of Israel. Finally, ADONAI sent His Son, Yeshua. They rejected His leadership and would soon choose to kill Him in order to maintain their relationship with Rome. But the real problem was that their hearts were far from G-d. Many of them had gone out to the Jordan River and there they had not responded to the call for repentance by John. They also especially opposed Yeshua's rebuke of them. They were just like their fathers. Even after returning from the punishment of exile to Babylon, they continued to turn away from ADONAI's call for repentance.

*42 Yeshua said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures? 'The stone which the builders rejected, this has become the chief cornerstone. This came from Adonai, and it is marvelous in our eyes.'" (Matthew 21:42 TLV).* Yeshua was quoting from Psalm 118 which says: *22 "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. 23 It is from Adonai: it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:22-23 TLV)!* The chief cornerstone and the capstone are one and the same. It is the foundation stone, the stone upon which rest all of the other stones. Psalm 118 which speaks of this stone been ascribed to King David. Evidence for this is found at the laying of the foundation of the second Temple after returning from Babylon: *10 "When the builders had laid the foundation of the Temple of Adonai, the kohanim, arrayed in their vestments and with clarions, and the Levites sons of Asaph with cymbals, were stationed to praise Adonai as prescribed by King David of Israel. 11 With praise and thanksgiving they sang to Adonai, "For He is good; For His mercy upon Israel endures forever."* Then all the people gave a great shout of praise to Adonai because the foundation of the House

of Adonai had been laid (Ezra 3:10-11 TLV). The clue here is “For He is good; For His mercy upon Israel endures forever”, which is the last verse in Psalm 118: 29 “Praise Adonai, for He is good, for His lovingkindness endures forever” (Psalm 118:29 TLV). If David wrote this, and very likely he did, these words of conviction had been around almost a thousand years when Yeshua made these statements. Even more condemning today, they have been read in the synagogues every *Pesach*, every *Shavuot* and every *Sukkot* of every year for the last two thousand years. Yeshua is the stone that the builders rejected when He was on earth and He continued to be rejected by the builders, the leaders, who then passed this rejection on to all Israel for the last two thousand years up until and including the present time.

Yeshua then said this to the *kohanim* and elders of Israel: 43 “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to people producing its fruits. 44 Whoever falls on this stone will be shattered; but the one upon whom it falls, it will crush him” (Matthew 21:43 TLV). I don’t believe that Yeshua was saying that the Kingdom of God would be taken away from the Jewish people as some anti-semitic theologies say. No, Yeshua was saying that He was taking the leadership away from these *kohanim* and elders. It happened gradually over the years up until 70 CE as He raised up new Jewish leaders in His disciples and in His brother Jacob. But in the year 70, He took it completely away from the *kohanim* when the Temple was destroyed. The rabbis who constructed Rabbinic Judaism after the fall of the Temple were a false leadership. The real leaders were the ones ordained by Yeshua. They were the living stones built upon the chief cornerstone, Yeshua, the stone which the other builders rejected.

44 *Whoever falls on this stone will be shattered; but the one upon whom it falls, it will crush him*” (Matthew 21:44 TLV). Most theologians believe this to be parallelism, saying almost the same thing in just a slightly different way. Whether you fall on it or it falls on you, the end result is the same. Shattered and crushed are basically the same. Saying this, Yeshua was using *remez* to hint back at Isaiah 8 to a prophecy of Isaiah: 14 “He will be a Sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 Many among them will stumble, fall, and be broken, snared and caught” (Isaiah 8:14-15 TLV). “He,” of course, is Yeshua, a Sanctuary for both houses of Israel, who at this time in the 1<sup>st</sup> century was in Judea. Judea was the fulfillment of the two sticks prophesied in Ezekiel 37. Prior to and at the time of the northern Kingdom of Israel’s capture and carrying away by the Assyrians, many fled from north to south and joined the two sticks together in the Kingdom of Judah. Judah continued as a political entity from the return from Babylon until Rome took it away from them. But those living in Israel at that time, including the Galilee, were representatives of the twelve tribes. The Samaritans were something else, Israelites intermixed with Assyrians and having a completely different religious system.

Isaiah said that Yeshua would be sanctuary, a *mikdash*. In Exodus 25 ADONAI told Moses: 8 “Have them make a Sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8 TLV). The Hebrew word underlying Sanctuary is *mikdash*. According to Isaiah 8, Yeshua’s body was the fulfillment of the Tabernacle in the wilderness where ADONAI’s *Ruach* dwelled. While He was on the earth, Yeshua was the embodiment and fulfilment of the physical *Mikdash* and now in heaven at the right hand of the Father He remains our spiritual *Mikdash*, the Sanctuary to which we can flee. But of course, ADONAI knew what Israel’s reaction would be and told Isaiah that they would stumble. *Sha’ul* comments on this passage by saying: 11 “I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their false step salvation has come to the Gentiles, to provoke Israel to jealousy” (Romans 11:11

TLV). And then he goes on to say that: 25 *“For I do not want you, brothers and sisters, to be ignorant of this mystery—lest you be wise in your own eyes—that a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer shall come out of Zion. He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. 27 And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins”* (Romans 11:25-27 TLV). Israel has stumbled over the “stone of stumbling,” but not so as to fall. But in the process of stumbling, they have opened the door for Gentiles to come in. *Shimon Kefa* brings together both ideas, the chief cornerstone and the stone of stumbling: 6 *“For it says in Scripture, “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone, a chosen, precious cornerstone. Whoever trusts in Him will never be put to shame.” 7 Now the value is for you who keep trusting; but for those who do not trust, “The stone which the builders rejected— this One has become the chief cornerstone,” 8 and “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they are disobeying the word—to this they were also appointed”* (1Peter 2:6-8 TLV). ADONAI’s word is true. The salvation of the Gentiles will provoke Israel to jealousy. They will see the truth about the stone over which they stumbled and recognize Yeshua as the “Chief Cornerstone.” It hasn’t happened yet, but it will. And then all Israel shall be saved!

45 *When the ruling kohanim and Pharisees heard Yeshua’s parables, they realized He was talking about them. 46 Although they were trying to seize Him, they feared the crowds, because they regarded Him as a prophet* (Matthew 21:45-46 TLV). All of a sudden they realized He was talking about them and they began to plan how they could seize Him. Saying that they feared the crowds, these verses also let us know that the small crowd which will condemn Yeshua before Pilate in just a few days was a setup. Where it actually took place is still under question. The majority view is that the place called Gabta, the Pavement, in Hebrew was at the northern end of the Temple Mount adjacent to the Roman Antonio Fortress. The other view is that it was outside Herod’s palace near the present day Tower of David on the western side of the old city of Jerusalem. Regardless of which one of these two places the event actually took place, there could not have been more than a few hundred people in High Priest Caiaphas’s lynch mob crying out “crucify him!” He feared the thousands who welcomed Yeshua into the city.

Now chapter 22. As we begin, Yeshua is still on the Temple Mount talking with the *kohanim* and Pharisees. He wasn’t finished making comparisons and in this parable, “The Invitation to the Wedding Feast,” Yeshua spoke directly to the ungodly leaders of Israel. 1 *Yeshua answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying, 2 “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who made a wedding feast for his son. 3 He sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they wouldn’t come. 4 Again he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who were invited, “Look, I’ve prepared my meal. My oxen and fattened cattle are killed, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast!”” 5 “But paying no attention, they went away, one to his own farm, another to his business. 6 And the rest grabbed his servants, humiliated them, and killed them* (Matthew 22:1-6 TLV).

This was very easy for the spiritual leaders of Israel to understand. Yeshua was talking about them. The King is ADONAI and His Son is Yeshua. They would have also understood that Yeshua was the *Mashiach*, the Messiah, with the wedding supper as the fulfillment of ADONAI’s marriage contract which He made with Israel at Sinai. The first servants He sent out were the early prophets and the later servants were the latter prophets. Not only did these earlier leaders reject ADONAI, but these present leaders of Israel totally rejected Yeshua and continued with their own way of doing things.

7 *Now the king became furious! Sending his troops, he destroyed those murderers and set fire to their city* (Matthew 22:7 TLV). ADONAI sent Nebuchadnezzar's troops to destroy Jerusalem, a fulfillment of what He promised Israel in Deuteronomy if they turned away from Him. He was not quick to judge, but gave them hundreds of years to turn back to Him. After disregarding the very direct call to come back from Jeremiah and the other prophets, ADONAI finally had no choice but to carry out His punishment.

8 *"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 So go into the highways and byways, and invite everyone you find to the wedding feast.'* 10 *And those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was filled with guests"* (Matthew 22:8-10 TLV). Some would say that this applies to Gentiles and I agree that that is the primary meaning. But it also includes Jews who were willing to respond. ADONAI said "invite everyone" and that would imply that it also includes Jews. Both bad and good Jews and Gentiles were invited and given an opportunity to repent.

11 *"But when the king came in to look over the guests, he saw a man there who wasn't dressed in wedding clothes. 12 'Friend,' he said to him, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' But the man was silent. 13 Then the king said to his servants, 'Tie him up hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'* 14 *For many are called, but few are chosen"* (Matthew 22:11-14 TLV).

The man without wedding clothes is one who was there with an unworthy heart and unrepentant heart. While both bad and good were invited, in order to be there, they had to have turned back to ADONAI. The wedding clothes were the indication that they had turned to ADONAI. This verse is also a warning for those today who say they are followers of Yeshua, but aren't. On ADONAI's judgment day, they will be cast into the outer darkness of eternal separation from Him. Few are chosen, not because ADONAI has rejected them, but because they have rejected Him. Those who are "chosen" are those who have chosen Yeshua.

As we end our study tonight, we leave Yeshua in Jerusalem in the Temple. It is still Sunday, Nisan 11, three days before His death on the stake. *Shalom aleichem!*