

“Hear another parable; There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country; And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first; and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.”
Mat. 21:33-41.

“And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, THEY PERCEIVED THAT HE SPAKE OF THEM.” – (Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself the Living Word; to wit: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, [and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,] full of grace and truth.”* Jn. 1:1,14.) Furthermore, when the Living Word dwelt below and for some 3-plus years preached and expounded the Gospel (See, e.g., Lk. 20:1; to wit: *“And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, AND PREACHED THE GOSPEL.”*), we then have the Living Word preaching, as it were, the Written Word. May we not expect a doubling of the power with which such holy preaching from the mouth of that Blessed One who spake as *“never man spake”* – Jn. 7:46 – smote and pierced the human heart; to wit: *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”* Heb. 4:12,13. Such powerful exposure of evil, and the murderous wickedness of the inner man, was undoubtedly at least one of the reasons why the chief priests and Pharisees sought to kill Jesus, when they perceived that He was talking about them in His parables.) – *“But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.”* Mat. 21:45,46.

***“And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise; And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, AND SLEW THEM. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”* (Mat. 22:1-7)**

“And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And

again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others... And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people; for they knew that HE HAD SPOKEN THE PARABLE AGAINST THEM; and they left him, and went their way.” (Mk. 12:1-12)

“Then he began to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a FAR country FOR A LONG TIME. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard; but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also, and cast him out. Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto him? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others... And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people; for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them. And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, THAT THEY MIGHT TAKE HOLD OF HIS WORDS, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.” (Lk. 20:9-20)

Beloved, what we have here are three versions of the same parable; to wit: – (Mat. 21:33-41; Mk. 12:1-12; and, Lk. 20:9-20) – recounting in stark, clinical detail the outrageous, criminal, murderous, and thieving conduct of a gang of cut-throat share-croppers. Rather than pay the landowner his fair share of the crops, the ruthless, crooked husbandmen systematically beat, stoned, and otherwise violently ill-treated, and murdered, all those sent by the landowner to collect. In other words – and more generally speaking – they violently rejected the messengers and the message of lawful authority. The chief priests and Pharisees knew that the Lord Jesus Christ was talking to them, commanding them to repent. He was the Messenger; and THAT was the message: Repent or perish. *“Except ye repent, ye shall ALL likewise perish.”* Lk. 13:3. They were too proud to repent.

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” (2 Tim. 2:24-26)

“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” (Lk. 15:7)

The chief priests and all their kind simply cannot stand such doctrines and such preaching. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle THAN FOR A RICH MAN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD; we would add from other scriptures and 64 years of preaching, It is easier for the Empire State Building to pass through the eye of a needle THAN FOR A CHIEF PRIEST OR A

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PHARISEE TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD. *“And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that HE SPAKE OF THEM. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.”* Mat. 21:45,46.

In other words, they would have murdered Jesus then and there, except for fortuitous, countervailing circumstances. But it is clear that they all violently rejected the holy message and the divine Messenger, and that they then and there made every effort to lay hands on the Messenger and kill Him, and were deterred only by fear of what the fickle crowd – as then constituted, oriented, and disposed – might do. There is something especially egregious – and gratuitously cruel – about what these murderers did in ill-treating messengers of peace and casting their bodies outside the confiscated vineyards.

When David sought to show kindness and to give comfort unto Hanun, king of the children of Ammon, upon the death of Hanun’s father, his intentions were misunderstood; causing David’s messengers of peace to be most shamefully ill-treated; and thereby precipitating a huge and bloody war; to wit:

“And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. Then said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun, the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father. And David’s servants came into the land of the children of Ammon. And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honor thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it? WHEREFORE Hanun took David’s servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away. When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed; and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return. And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired (some 33,000 Syrian mercenaries). And when David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men.” (2 Sam. 10:1-7)

Behold what mighty consequences follow ill-treatment of MESSENGERS (!) – whether parabolic or historic (!). Only the value of an annual vintage – (i.e., landowner’s share of a grape harvest) – was at issue or stake in the parable of our Lord Jesus Christ as reported by Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and yet the messengers sent to fetch home the landowner’s share were beaten, shamefully and despitefully treated, sent back empty of the landowner’s share of the vintage, and, eventually, KILLED.

Now see what carnage and blood-letting followed the relatively minor ill-treatment of David’s own messengers who were sent by David to comfort king Hanun over the death of his father. Wars and battles were fought, resulting in thousands killed; to wit: *“Wherefore Hanun took David’s servants, and shaved them, and cut off their garments in the midst, hard by their buttocks, and sent them away. Then there went certain, and told David how the men were served. And he sent to meet them; for THE MEN WERE GREATLY ASHAMED. And the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return. And when the children of Ammon saw that they had made themselves odious to David, Hannun and the children of Ammon sent a thousand talents of silver to hire them chariots and horsemen out of Mesopotamia (i.e., the region around Babylon and Chaldea), and out of Syria-Maachah, and out of Zobah (Northern Syria). So they hired thirty and two thousand chariots, and the king of Maachah and his people; who came and pitched before Medeba.”* 1 Chron. 19:4-7.

In addition to these thousands of hired mercenaries, the children of Ammon themselves drafted many more thousands of their own citizens for the war they were planning with David, arising from their fear that they had made themselves odious to David, by the shameful (though not lethal) way they had ill-treated David’s friendly MESSENGERS; to wit:

“And the children of Ammon gathered themselves together FROM THEIR CITIES, and came to battle. And when David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men.” (1 Chron. 19:7,8)

You see, Beloved, how this thing has now taken on a snowball effect, each side rapidly raising the bloody stakes of a war that is by now inevitable. First Joab sallies forth, with his brother Abishai in tow – brave speeches and all: to wit: ***“And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me; but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will help thee. Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God; and let the Lord do that which is good in his sight. So Joab and the people that were with him drew nigh before the Syrians unto the battle; and they fled before him. And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians”*** – (Ammon’s hired mercenaries, remember – losing the war for them) – I say, ***“when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, they likewise fled before Abishai his brother, and entered into the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem.” 1 Chron. 19:12-15.***

And then, Beloved, rather than stand down from the brink of all-out war, those goofy Syrian war lords – (spelled, morons, m-o-r-o-n-s) – I say, those Syrian morons sent for high-powered reinforcements from up beyond the Euphrates River, including the mighty commanding general Shophach, captain of the host of the powerful monarch, one Hadarezer, King of Zobah. This brought David himself into the ever-enlarging war, and many, many more thousands killed; to wit: ***“And it was told David; and he gathered all Israel, and passed over Jordan, and came upon them, and set the battle in array against them. So when David had put the battle in array against the Syrians, they fought with him. But the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew of the Syrians seven thousand men which fought in chariots, and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shophach the captain of the host. And when the servants of Hadarezer saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they made peace with David, and became his servants; neither would the Syrians help the children of Ammon any more.” 1 Chron. 19:17-19.***

Can you hearken back to the ill-treatment of David’s MESSENGERS as being the efficacious cause of all such devastation? Thus it is seen that populations are decimated and empires rise and fall, all contingent upon God’s MESSENGERS. Beloved, why do you suppose our dear Lord Jesus is called ***“the Messenger of the Covenant?”*** to wit:

“Behold, I will send my MESSENGER, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.” (Mal. 3:1)

And what is the holy message of His Priestly Messengers? Answer: The Second Coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory – the Messenger of the Covenant – to judge the wicked and reward His ill-treated messengers; to wit:

“But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ sope; And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” (Mal. 3:2,3)

Beloved, the dear Lord Jesus ***“hath made us kings and PRIESTS unto God.” Rev. 1:6. “For he (the PRIEST) is the MESSENGER of the Lord of hosts.” Mal. 2:7.*** Beloved, that’s us; and God will deal harshly with those who ill-treat His faithful messengers.

I love you. Amen.