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Two Pointed Parables (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In "Two Pointed Parables (Part 1)," Steve Gregg examines a pericope in Matthew 21 where Jesus is questioned by the Sanhedrin about his authority. The passage includes a parable about two sons, one of whom initially refuses to work in the vineyard but later has a change of heart and goes to work while the other initially agrees to work but fails to follow through. Gregg suggests that the parable highlights the importance of actions over words and emphasizes the need for individuals to demonstrate obedience to God rather than simply professing their faith.

Transcript

Matthew 21, today we're going to start at verse 23. In our last session we took verses 12 through 22, but we also took a pericope. Hey, there's a word you didn't know, hey? A pericope from John chapter 12.

Now, you know, imagine me introducing that word this late in the year. I might as well give it to you, though. You know, even this late in the year you can still learn things.

And, uh, what's that? Oh, Phil already used the word pericope? Pericope? Pericope, huh? Well, he may be right. I've never heard anyone pronounce it before. I've only seen it in writing many times.

But if it's pericope, that's a surprise to me. P-E-R-I-C-O-P-E. I'd say pericope.

But maybe it's a pericope, who knows? Agapea. Okay, let's call it a pericope just for the sake of having something to standardize it. A pericope is a segment.

An independent, a segment that stands alone. Usually in the Gospels it's referred to, and that's what I was referring to in John chapter 12, verses 20 through 50 in our last session. We stuck that pericope or pericope or whatever you pronounce it as in between Matthew 21, verses 22 and 23.

Now we come to verse 23. Now when he came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted him as he was teaching and said, by what authority are

you doing these things? And who gave you this authority? But Jesus answered and said to them, I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell me, I will likewise tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, where was it from? From heaven or from men? And they reasoned among themselves, saying, if we say from heaven, he will say to us, why then did you not believe him? But if we say from men, we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.

So they answered Jesus and said, we do not know. And he said to them, neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things. Now, Jesus always remained in command of the situation, even when he had to speak on the defensive.

In this case, they came against him. They challenged him. And it's hard to know exactly what answer they were hoping to get when they said, by what authority do you do these things? The question was either rhetorical, meaning they didn't believe that he had any authority or even could claim any authority to do these things.

I mean, if I say, who gave you the right to do such and such? It usually means I don't believe you have any right to, and you don't really have a good answer to that question. It's a rhetorical question that suggests that I'm trying to point out to you that you don't have the right, rather than a question that's asking for real information. Who gave you the right to do this? That's the kind of question they asked him here.

Who gave you the authority to do this? Well, what he was doing, of course, was a day or two earlier, when he had given all the money changers out of the temple. Ever since then, he'd been sitting in the temple teaching there. And, of course, he had no authorization from any of the scribes or Pharisees or from any rabbi.

He had no rabbinic training. Where did he get the authority to sit in the temple as if he owned it and teach there as the rabbis might, or to drive people out as if it was his own place? That's the kind of question that this was. I mean, how dare you do this? Now, there's also the possibility that they did expect an answer.

Then they said, by what authority do you do this? And that they figured he would say something like, from God, which would have been true, of course. In fact, in the passage we read in our last session in John chapter 12, he said, the words I speak, you know, the Father gave me those words. As I hear him, I speak what he says.

So, obviously, his answer would, if he was going to give them an answer, would have to be, well, I got this authority from my Father. In fact, among the closing words we read in John chapter 12, at the end of that chapter, were, I don't speak on my own authority, but I speak what my Father commands me to speak. So, to say that he's not speaking on his own authority, but what his Father gave him, obviously the answer would be he's speaking on his Father's authority.

Now, it's possible they were asking the question, hoping to get that answer. Because if he gave that answer, they might use that as an occasion to call him a blasphemer. Now, you might say, but is it really blasphemy to say that you're acting on God's authority? That depends on how the rabbis want to interpret blasphemy.

I mean, after all, when Jesus finally was brought to trial before the Sanhedrin, he said he was the Christ, and in saying so, they said he was a blasphemer. Well, there's never been any precedent in Jewish courts for a man being charged with blasphemy for saying he was the Messiah. There had been others who claimed he was the Messiah, but never had that ever been defined as a blasphemy.

A blasphemy is usually when you speak derogatorily against God but since they did charge him to their own satisfaction with blasphemy on this later date in Matthew 26, when he said that he was the Christ, it's quite clear that they could interpret blasphemy any way they wanted to. And therefore, it may be that they were hoping he'd say, I'm speaking on God's authority, and they would say then, ah, you're blaspheming. You're claiming that you have as much authority as God does.

However, Jesus had said similar things before, as we pointed out in John 12 and in John 7. And even way back in Matthew chapter 9, when Jesus healed the man who was lowered through the roof, who was paralyzed, and he said, your sins are forgiven. And they said, who is this man who forgives sins? Only God can do that. And Jesus said, well, what's easier for me to do, to say your sins are forgiven or to say, rise up and take up your bed and walk? He said, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

He told the man to take the bed and walk. He said he did have authority on earth to forgive sins. The implication would certainly be that he got that authority from God, because only God has that authority, and anyone to whom he delegates it.

He claimed that it had been delegated to him, or that he had that intrinsically. So there were other occasions where Jesus had spoken about the source of his authority in such a way as to clarify to anyone who was listening that he was acting on his father's authority. He wasn't acting on his own volition.

Now, as I say, in asking them, by what authority do you do these things? They may have simply been intending that as a challenge, not expecting an answer. Or they might have hoped that he would give an answer that would either be blasphemous or perhaps lame. Maybe they thought he wouldn't know what to answer, that he'd stutter and look foolish in the face of such a question.

After all, to drive people out of the temple, which was a public building, as if you had exclusive rights to determine what went on there. And when the people that you were driving out actually had apparently the tacit and exclusive approval of the priesthood

who really were in charge of the temple precincts, to act like you have the authority to do that is quite a claim implicitly. So they ask him, by what authority do you do these kinds of things? And he doesn't give them an answer.

And the reason he doesn't is because he knows that they're not really interested in the information. They might be interested in getting an answer from him for the purpose of accusing him, but they're not interested in the information. They're not even interested in the truth of the matter.

They're not interested in that. And he decides to show them why he won't give them a straight answer. He says, well, let me ask you a question first.

And if you answer me, then I'll give you an answer. And so he says in verse 25, the baptism of John, where was it from? From heaven or from men? In Mark's gospel, the parallels in Mark 11, and where Jesus poses this particular question to them in Mark's gospel, it's Mark 11, 30, after he says, he gets aggressive with them. They attacked him.

Now he puts them on the defensive. He says, John's baptism, was it from heaven or from men? Answer me. Mark 11, 30 says, makes him, you know, he kind of turns and snaps on them and puts them in a position to have to do what he says.

And he reasoned, excuse me, they reasoned among themselves, saying, if we say from heaven, he will say to us, why then did you not believe him? John the Baptist had spoken about Jesus. He had said the kingdom of God was at hand. He had called people to repent of their sins.

He had called the scribes and Pharisees, vipers and hypocrites. And he had pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God that takes away this in the world. John had done all those things.

Now, if the Pharisees on this occasion and the chief priests were to say, well, John's authority was from heaven. They would be saying that he was a prophet. And therefore, they would be saying that John spoke truth.

The problem then, of course, is if they made that admission publicly, they opened themselves up to Jesus coming back and saying exactly what they knew he would say. Why didn't you believe him? Why didn't you believe him when he said you were vipers and hypocrites? Why didn't you believe him when he said the kingdom of God is at hand? You're acting like you don't believe me when I say that it is. He's a prophet.

Why don't you believe him? And so they realized that they couldn't come out and say that John's authority was from heaven or that that is from God. That would suddenly make them look bad in the position they were taking against Jesus. So the only alternative open to them was to say, well, he was from men.

His authority was human, not divine. Now, they were afraid to take that approach because it says they were afraid of the people. We fear the multitude for all count John as a prophet.

Actually, in Luke's parallel in Luke 20 and verse 6, it's more specific of what they feared. Luke 20 and verse 6 says they fear the people that all the people would stone them. That's how popular John had become.

Of course, he was a legend in his own time. But after his death, he probably was even more legendary in the mind of the Jew, this great prophet, and he had become a martyr at the hands of the hated Herods. He had become a prophet for the past who had been put to death, like Elijah who had been pursued by Ahab and Jezebel.

John probably had grown to even larger than life proportions in the memory and the public imagination of the Jewish people who remembered him after his death. And the scribes and Pharisees and the elders and the chief priests who were here interacting with Jesus, they knew that the crowd was just volatile enough that if they said this man, he was a prophet, that the people would stone them. Imagine if they'd stone their own religious leaders.

It shows that the popular crowd put more stock in a prophet than they put in the Pharisees and in the priests and so forth because they'd stone the priests or at least the priests felt like they might and the Pharisees and the elders if the elders would even so much as suggest that John the Baptist wasn't a prophet. So for fear of that, the scribes and the elders had no idea how the tables had now been turned on his opponents. They came to try to make Jesus look bad.

They came in a public place while he was teaching and said by what authority are you doing those things? Hoping that whatever answer he gave they could turn it around and make him look bad. But he had asked a very simple question which put them really on the horns of a dilemma and it really made them look bad you're not talking about me. He said the same things I'm saying therefore you have no grounds to oppose what I'm saying or to object to me.

They couldn't do that. They couldn't let that happen. On the other hand, they were in a situation where if they gave the opposite answer with all the crowds around they knew that the crowds would probably take up stones right there and stone him to death.

So here they break out into a hot sweat just thinking about their options. They no doubt wish they hadn't confronted Jesus that day because he really turned the tables around and they were the ones in the hot seat. So their answer they come back to him with is well we don't know or we can't tell you.

Now it's interesting to speculate as to how they really did think about John the Baptist.

Did the Pharisees and scribes and priests think John the Baptist was a prophet or not? It's true John the Baptist had bad things about them. On the other hand, John the Baptist had really taken some shots at the Herod which might have made some of the scribes at least pleased with John the Baptist and made them maybe feel like he was a prophet.

We're not told exactly what their true opinion was of John. All we are told is that they considered two possible answers they might give. One is that he was a prophet from God and the other is that he wasn't.

And neither answer was politically expedient for them so they gave neither. Did they secretly know that John was a prophet? If they did, then it's all the more damning of them that they rejected Jesus because clearly John did speak in favor of Jesus and their rejection of Jesus would have been against what they knew to be true if they knew John was a prophet. If they believed John was not a prophet, and that's probably where they stood, then it's clear that they were really out of touch with the times they were living and as Jesus pointed out to them that they believed the signs of the times in which they were living and where the prophecies of Malachi were being fulfilled, that the messengers were coming before the face of the Messiah, they were really blind.

And that's probably the correct answer although there may have been some who in their own hearts felt that John might be a prophet but whatever they thought, neither answer was expedient to give. So they said we don't know. Now this was not an honest answer.

And their reason for giving the answer is not out of honesty that they really didn't have an opinion but because whatever their opinion might have been, Jesus could turn it around and it would turn out for their worst. And therefore rather than say what their opinion was, rather than represent what they believed to be true, they decided to act as if they'd be non-committal. And Jesus saw that as a cowardly lack of integrity, which is what it was of course.

And he said, well then I'm not going to cast my probe before a swine. If you're not willing to tell me where John's baptism is from, from heaven or from earth, then I'm not going to tell you where my authority is from. What good will it do? John the Baptist clearly proclaimed himself to be a prophet of God, a voice of one crying to the wilderness that Isaiah had predicted, the messenger sent before the face of the Messiah.

If they can't believe John they wouldn't listen to him either. And the fact is they were showing themselves by their wimpy response to his challenge, they were showing themselves to be not so concerned about telling the truth or concerned about integrity as they were about saving their own skin or saving their own position. And he said, I'm not going to bother telling you.

I'm not going to bother with you. Essentially I think his thought was anyone who is that uncourageous as far as truth is concerned and willing to sacrifice your integrity to save

your image, you're not worthy of the truth. And therefore I won't tell you by what authority I do these things.

Of course there is an implied answer in this. The very question Jesus asked about John was an implied answer to their question. When they say by what authority do you do these things? His question implied essentially by the same authority John did what he did.

And if you can decide by what authority John spoke then you can decide by what authority you do these things. But he didn't say it quite like this but the implied statement is if you acknowledge John's authority as being from heaven then you'll know where my authority came from because John spoke about me and said I was the Lamb of God. So you won't need me to answer just look at your own hearts.

What do you think about John the Baptist? Your belief about his authority will answer your question about what you're going to believe about mine. Now Jesus attacks them against them. The second one which begins at verse 33 is found in all the synoptic Gospels.

It's in Matthew and Mark and Luke. However the first of them in verses 28 through 32 is only found in Matthew. I'll take that one first since it comes first and as I said the other one is found in all three Gospels.

Matthew 21, 28 says But what do you think? A man had two sons and he came to the first and said I go sir but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise and he answered and said I go sir but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father? They said to him the first.

Jesus said to them Surely I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you for John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him and you did not afterward relent and believe him. So Jesus indicates that he knows their answer to his question about John the Baptist that he's just asked. They said we can't tell you whether John's baptism is from heaven or from men and Jesus said I know your answer.

You didn't believe him so you believe it was from men. But he says you guys on the one hand and these tax collectors and sinners he tells them both to do the same thing go out and serve his in vineyards. One first of all says he won't but then changes his mind and goes out and obeys his father.

The second one acts as if he's obedient right from the beginning but never does do what he's told. Obviously the first of those sons is the one who obeyed his father even though he initially showed a rebellious attitude. The son who says no I won't go but later changed his mind and went at least he's the one who obeyed his father whereas the

second son who only with his mouth professed loyalty and obedience to his father that son clearly didn't do his father's will.

This reminds us of the parable of the prodigal son of the parable of the prodigal son because in that parable a man had two sons also and the story is different but one son brought dishonor to him but later came back and pleased him by repentance and the other son never displeased him outwardly but never really obeyed him either in his heart and was found to be disobedient in the end when his father said come on in and rejoice with us and the older son wouldn't. He said I've always obeyed you father but in that very moment he was disobeying his father because he wouldn't come into the seat that's in Luke 15. Now here's the same thing.

The prodigal son in the story of the prodigal was the tax collectors and sinners who had displeased God earlier in their lives they were Jewish people of God's family who had displeased God they'd been disobedient they'd been like the prodigal they wasted their opportunities and so forth but later repented and came back and they were now attaching themselves to Jesus and Jesus was getting some criticism for that but the older son was the son who was like the Pharisees who had never done anything outwardly that anyone could point to as disobedient to his father but in his heart he never really shared his father's heart he never cared about his father that much he never really loved the people his father loved or rejoiced at the things that made his father rejoice his heart was in a totally different place where as Jesus said in Matthew 15 quoting Isaiah 29.13 he said these people draw near to me with their mouths but in their heart they're far from me and this parable basically has the same message the first son who says no I won't go and he actually says he's not going to obey his father but changes his mind and does he's like the prodigal he displeases his father initially but he changes his mind and in the end he turns out obedient that's again like the tax collectors and sinners the Pharisees and the chief priests and those guys were all the ones who had a reputation of being obedient they spoke and acted as if they were obeying God but in their hearts they were never loving their brother never loving their neighbors themselves never doing the things that really mattered to God therefore they never really did go out and do what he said they just talked as if they were doing it they talked a good ball game but they never put feet to their words and they never did the thing that God said to do and Jesus asked them which of these sons really did the will of his father and without realizing how they fit into this story they gave the right answer well the first son did the will of his father well that first son represents the tax collectors and sinners and prostitutes the second son the one whom they acknowledge did not do the will of his father was themselves and Jesus says so in verse 31 he says assuredly I say to you that to you tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you that's because the tax collectors and harlots are like the son who said no at first they have come out of a background of rebellion against God they were Jews who rebelled against their heritage a prostitute is in violation of everything taught in the Old Testament but there were Jewish women who

were prostitutes a tax collector had betrayed everything that his country stood for and yet some of them were Jews tax collectors and yet these people were coming and repenting and becoming part of Jesus' movement now they were coming in like the first son but the Pharisees and scribes and chief priests and elders they were not coming in they were not following Jesus they were not accepting the kingdom of God which had been announced by John the Baptist and by Jesus and he says John the Baptist when he preached to these tax collectors and harlots believed him and they believe me now and you guys didn't believe John even when you saw what God was doing through John you still didn't let it sink in you still didn't repent and you never did believe and that's why you don't believe in me he's saying ok so the parable is a lot shorter than the story of the prodigal son but the same idea it's a defense really of the kind of people that were coming to Jesus the kind of people that the religious sort would never associate with yet Jesus defended his actions and defended them and he of course used the occasion as a time to point out the disobedience the actual disobedience as the scribes Pharisees and so forth now the remainder of this chapter has to do with this remaining parable which again is a long one of sorts we have I've talked about it a lot during the year in fact so much so that I'm almost loathed to get into it again I like this parable very much and that's why we've heard so much of it this year but it's very familiar to most of you I'm sure but we'll go ahead and take it it lies ahead of us here verse 33 hear another parable there was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it dug a wine press in it and built a tower and he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country now when vintage time drew near he sent his servants to the vinedressers that they might receive its fruit and the vinedressers took his servants beat one killed one stoned another again he sent other servants more than the first and they did likewise to them then last of all he sent his son to them saying they will respect my son but when the vinedressers saw the son they said among themselves this is the heir come let us kill him and seize his inheritance and they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him therefore when the landowner of the vineyard comes what will he do to those vinedressers they said to him he will destroy those wicked men miserably and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their season Jesus said to them did you never read in the scriptures the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone this was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes therefore I say to you that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it and whoever falls on this stone will be broken but on whomever it falls it will grind him to powder that whole verse is absent from some manuscripts now when the chief priests and pharisees heard his parables they perceived that he was speaking of them but when they sought to lay hands on him they feared the multitudes because they took him for a prophet so they wouldn't lay hands on Jesus on this occasion for the same reason they wouldn't say that John's baptism was from men because the crowds believed both John and Jesus to be a prophet and the pharisees and scribes and other opponents were afraid of his popular appeal now let's go through this parable as I say it should be very familiar to you by now his opening line in verse 53

where he says there was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard set a hedge around it dug a winepress in it and built a tower comes from Isaiah chapter 5 a parable that Isaiah told that starts out just the same way Isaiah chapter 5 verses 1 and 2 it says now let me sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved regarding his vineyard my well beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill he dug up and cleared out the stones he planted it with the choicest vine he built a tower in its midst he also made a winepress in it ok so that's the same idea here he went to all the trouble to get fruit that's what people plant vineyards for they want fruit they want grapes so they can make wine and it says so he expected it to bring forth good grapes but it brought forth wild grapes and Isaiah goes on to say therefore what God's going to do in verse 5 is take away its hedge and it will be burned and break down its wall and it shall be trampled down I will lay it waste it shall not be pruned or dug but there shall come up briars and thorns I will command the clouds that they rain no rain on it for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah are his pleasant plants he looked for justice but behold oppression for righteousness but behold weeping now even though there's a mention of the men of Judah here in this portion of Isaiah most of the prophecies are focused on the northern kingdom of Israel up through about chapter 7 of Isaiah so I have a feeling I'm sorry I'm sorry no those chapters are mostly about Judah it's at chapter 7 that they begin to be about Israel but he mentions Israel and Judah now the vineyard is Israel the plant is the stock of Judah and he planted them in a fruitful hill he gave them a land flowing with milk and honey he put a hedge about them that means he protected them from their enemies he gathered the stones he removed the obstacles the Canaanites that were once there and their idolatry and so forth he did everything one could do he put a fence even the hedge around it could refer to the law that he gave them he gave them good laws taught them his ways taught them what justice looks like he was looking for justice he was looking for righteousness and he figured he's given them every advantage they ought to be able to produce it but he didn't get it from them now if you turn to our present parable in Matthew 21 Jesus starts it out just the same way there was a certain land owner who planted a vineyard set a hedge around it dug a wine press in it built a tower all those features are taken from Isaiah 5 and therefore they should have clicked in the minds of the hearers that he's talking about something very similar to what Isaiah was talking about there is a possibility though that his listeners were not anywhere near as familiar with Isaiah as he was Jesus quoted from Isaiah a great deal and I don't know I mean I'm sure that the scholars and the experts in the law were familiar with Isaiah but many of his listeners might not have been including some of the leaders and they may have also been thrown off their guard by the way the parable proceeded from there because whereas in Isaiah it just says he did all this stuff to produce good grapes but didn't produce good grapes but produced bad grapes Jesus takes the parable a slightly different direction in the middle of verse 33 he says and he leased it to vine dressers and went into a far country now the vine dressers or the tenants of the vineyard are not in the Isaiah passage this focuses the reason for God not getting the fruit he wanted out of Israel in a certain direction in Isaiah the question is

why didn't I get good grapes I gave them everything why didn't they produce what I wanted them to produce here this parable is told in such a way as to answer that question the reason God didn't get his grapes is not because grapes couldn't be grown there but because the administrators the tenants of the vineyard the leaders of Israel they hindered him from getting what he wanted they were not submitted to him they rejected his messengers and his son and that's why he never got any fruit out of this nation of Israel because their leadership was bad now in the setting of the time it was not uncommon for a wealthy landowner to lease out a vineyard or a field to tenants and usually the understanding was they would use the property produce what they could from it and give him a portion of the produce as their rent or their lease on the property so when it was time for vintage it was time for him to get his rent payment on the property it was his property and he had rented it to these people and the agreement was they can keep using it as long as they pay their yearly rent on it so at vintage time he sent his messengers to get the rent and the rent was a certain percentage of the fruit now of course we see in this parable that the tenants of the vineyard did not wish to surrender any of the fruit they wouldn't give him even the portion that was his and this was outrageous now it says he sent servants verse 34 to the vine dressers that they might receive its fruit now the vine dressers took his servants beat one killed one stoned another again he sent other servants more than the first and they did to them likewise to them now this of course represents all the prophets that God had sent to Israel throughout the Old Testament time he had given them his law he told them he wanted them to produce justice and righteousness they didn't and so he sent the prophets to complain about that and the prophets came and said God is looking for fruit from this vineyard God wants his share he wants you to produce justice and righteousness and faithfulness and humility with your God and they never did instead they beat up the prophets and abused them in the way that Jesus describes so the parable up to this point is simply summarizing the treatment God's messengers the prophets have received throughout history whenever they came and confronted the leaders of Israel about their fruitlessness in Mark's gospel the parallel to this in Mark chapter 12 is a little more graphic in how they treated them let me just read a few verses from the parallel in Mark in Mark 12 2 it says now at vintage time he sent a servant to the vine dressers that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vine dressers and they took him and beat him and sent him away empty handed again he sent them another servant and at him they threw stones wounded him in the head and sent him away shamefully treated and again he sent another and him they killed and many others beating some and killing some same story but essentially a little more detail this guy one servant gets wounded in the head by their stones another gets beat up and thrown out others are killed essentially what Jesus is saying here just gives a little more detail there in Mark of how he kind of painted the picture of the continuous abuse that the owners messengers received from these tenants ok now in Matthew 21 37 it says then last of all he sent his son to them saying they will respect my son now I would like to draw your attention to the opening words of that verse last of all those words mean something it means this is

the last messenger he is going to send them last of all now remember this falls in the context of him having sent an indefinitely large number of messengers previously he sent this one that one several more more than the first time more and they all got this kind of treatment and last of all he sent his son and the suggestion here is that the time that was hundreds of years long in the Old Testament where God was sending prophet after prophet giving Israel another chance and yet another chance and yet another chance and yet another chance and they keep making the wrong moves they keep making the wrong responses that was not going to go on indefinitely in fact this was now going to be their last chance now that doesn't mean it was just the last chance for that generation of Jews the context is not for a particular generation of Jews but for the nation as a whole all those messengers in the story although they all came in the lifetime of one set of tenants in the story they represent all the messengers that God sent to the nation of Israel to all generations of Israel so he says last of all he sent his son it means that the whole nation is getting their last chance with the appearance of God's son on the scene with Jesus coming as he did he was announcing their last opportunity to produce the fruit now we are reminded of course of his cursing the fig tree and saying to the fig tree no one will ever eat fruit from you again you'll never produce fruit again same idea just a different figure in this case it's a vineyard there was a fig tree but the idea is it is cursed this is their last chance they've blown it and therefore they're not going to have any more chances now this is significant because it does not encourage us to see the New Testament teaching that there is any future fruitfulness to be had from Israel that Israel will someday for example become a nation of justice and righteousness as many people hope that it may that they might acknowledge the Messiah as a nation and have a righteous nation again no that time they had plenty of opportunities to do that hundreds of years but now he says no this is the last chance now and you're not going to do better on this chance than you did the other time last of all he sent his son and this is the climax because how they treat the son is going to determine their ultimate and forever fate because it's their last chance verse 38 but when the vine dressers saw the son they said among themselves this is the heir come let us kill him and seize his inheritance now notice their thinking here they didn't say oh here's another servant what this one claims to be the son nonsense he's not the son let's just kill him like we did the rest they recognize him immediately as the heir they recognize him as the son of the owner their whole reasoning depends on the fact that they recognize he's the heir this is the guy who when the owner dies he'll get the vineyard but if he's dead then when the owner dies we'll just keep the vineyard there won't be any heir to claim it from us we'll just get what's his by killing him they recognize him as the legitimate claimant to the property the legitimate heir and they said let's kill him and take his inheritance which suggests that the Jews who crucified Jesus recognized or at least had every reason to recognize that Jesus was the son of God that he was the Messiah that he was the heir to the state of Israel and the true king but to acknowledge him would mean they have to give it up their leadership but if they killed him they thought they might hold on to it longer for themselves the inheritance would be I think the vineyard itself yeah the vineyard was

that which the heir would stand to inherit if his father died and so they said this is the heir to the vineyard essentially and if we kill him we'll keep that which would have been his inheritance namely the vineyard so that Israel the people of God when Jesus came he was the rightful king of the Jews he was the one that the prophets had declared would come and be the righteous king but the leaders of Israel didn't want a righteous king they didn't want a king at all they already had the authority and the nation stowed up pretty much in a way and so they didn't satisfy the spirit to themselves they had the power and they realized that he was no way going to pick them to be his cabinet so if he came to power they'd lose their power and so they thought let's kill him and we'll hold on to our position kill him and we'll take what really is his and keep it for ourselves that's what the idea is in the motivation of these people in killing him and they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him and Jesus having finished the story says he asks his listeners for a response in verse 40 therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes what will he do to those vine dressers and they said to him he will destroy those wicked men miserably and lease his vineyard to other vine dressers who will render to him the fruits in their season now you'll notice the way that Matthew has this Jesus asked the question and his listeners gave the answer in verse 41 in both Mark and Luke Mark 12, 9 and Luke 20 verse 16 the parallels Mark 12, 9 and Luke 20, 16 it actually has Jesus asking the question and giving this response himself which is peculiar so they have Jesus himself saying what shall he do to those vine dressers he will destroy those wicked men he doesn't wait for their answer he just gives the answer according to Mark and Luke and interestingly in Luke's version in Luke 20 verse 16 when Jesus gives this answer that he's going to destroy those wicked men and lease his vineyard to others who will render the fruits in their seasons Luke 20, 16 says and when they heard it they said certainly not in other words not only did they not give this answer but they objected to it strongly when Jesus gave it now I don't know how to sort this out exactly I mean there's several ways it might be sorted out and it's not a serious problem at all but either either they gave the answer as Matthew records and Jesus agreed with it he certainly did down in verse 43 he agreed with what they said and so that Mark and Luke just compressed it and gave Jesus has given the answer and skipped over the part where they gave the answer or whether it's the other way I don't know I you know I personally think that they did give the answer I mean it's easier to explain it that way and then that Matthew excuse me Mark and Luke have compressed the story to show that Jesus agreed with the answer they just had him giving the answer as they rendered the story but the interesting thing here is that Luke has some of them at least objecting to the answer because if you'll check out Luke 20 and verse 16 it says in verse 16 he will come and notice Jesus asked the question in the previous verse 15 therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them he will come and destroy those vine dressers and give the vineyard to others and when they heard it they said certainly not now that's interesting there were at least some we know from Luke that didn't like this answer that did not approve of the answer even before the explanation was applied to them well maybe because they recognized quicker than others did that it did apply to them perhaps how we should understand it is

that Jesus asked the question and some of the duller people in the crowd who didn't quite get the implications of the story they gave the first answer that came to the top of their head they were thinking as if they were the vine the vineyard owner and you know as the story goes you've had all your servants killed or beat up and you've had your own son your only son murdered by these wicked men of course the first thing off the top of their head is we're going to go and if I were that owner I'd go and I'd kill those horrible people and give it to someone else and it's probable that that answer was given by the less perceptive ones just giving their gut reaction as Jesus no doubt intended for them to do but I think from what Luke tells us there must have been a few of them there that were a little more perceptive than the rest and recognized that the parable was directed against them and that they were the ones and that what Jesus was saying was that if in fact the owner is going to destroy those people and give the vineyard to someone else the suggestion is that God is going to destroy the Jews and give the kingdom or the vineyard to another nation and the very thought of it was revolting them and they said certainly not they couldn't even consider that another nation would ever replace Israel as the ones through whom the fruit that God has been seeking these many millennia would be obtained by God and so we find some reacting negatively to this answer and some actually gave the answer it would appear comparing Matthew and Luke and I think that just agrees with what we know to be true about the crowd in John's gospel we read frequently of there being a division in the crowd some say he's a good man some say no he's deceiving the people some say he's the Messiah others say well when the Messiah comes no one's going to know where he comes from but we know where this one came from and others say no he's from Galilee the Messiah's supposed to be from Bethlehem you see all this confusion in the crowd I have a feeling it's just as I said that when Jesus was asked the question some of the more the ones who were just kind of wrapped up in the story and weren't thinking about what it's meaning was they gave the first answer that popped their head well he's going to go destroy those guys but a few of the more pensive thoughtful ones who recognized that this was about them said wait a minute here wait a minute you mean God's going to destroy us Jews and give the vineyard out to some other nation other than Israel God forbid certainly not they say and so Jesus justifies his statement from an old testament from an old testament quotation which is from Psalm 118 this psalm is quoted a number of times in the new testament it's one of those passages in the old testament where the Messiah is likened to a stone or a rock in a building that God is building and so in Matthew 21 42 Jesus said to them did you never read in the scriptures the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone this was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes as a result and as I said the quotation here from Psalm 118 it's verses 22 and 23 and Peter quotes this also in 1 Peter chapter 2 as being about Jesus this same psalm and it comes up parts of it come up in other places in the new testament now the idea here is that Jesus has just accepted their answer he has not yet as Matthew wrote he has not yet accepted their answer as true which he does in the next verse but he has not yet he has accepted their answer and some of them are objecting to the answer and so he justifies it that in fact

God will take away the vineyards from some of them by Old Testament prediction here is an Old Testament prediction the builders are going to reject a particular stone however the stone is God's chosen stone it is God's preferred stone and he intends it to be the cornerstone and the chief stone in the building but the builders don't like this stone it doesn't fit their idea of what the blueprint is supposed to look like so they reject that stone they throw it aside and use other stones but despite their rejection of it that stone becomes the foundation of an entirely different building the builders are rejected themselves and the building they are working on is rejected because they rejected the chief cornerstone that was provided for the project and the whole building is rejected