

THE TENANTS

Large crowds were in Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. Among them were those looking for an excuse to arrest Jesus. They joined the crowds listening to Jesus teach in the temple courts.

Jesus knew the chief priests, teachers of the law and elders were listening. He told the crowd this parable.

A man planted a vineyard, built a wall around it, dug a pit for a winepress and built a watchtower.

Then he put tenant farmers in charge of his land. They would look after the vineyard, collecting their part of the harvest while he would have his share. Then the owner moved away.

When the harvest approached, he sent one of his servants to collect his share of the fruit.

However, the tenant farmers seized the servant, beat him and sent him back empty-handed.

The farmer sent another servant but they struck him on the head and treated him badly.

Another servant was sent but he was set upon and killed. Other servants came to collect the farmer's share of the harvest but they were also beaten or killed.

Those planning to kill Jesus were listening as He was telling this parable. Jesus continued ...

All the farmer had left was his son whom he dearly loved. 'They will respect my son,' he thought and sent him.

But the tenant farmers said to each another. 'This is the heir. Let's kill him so we will inherit the land.' So they grabbed the son, murdered him and threw his body out of the vineyard.

Jesus asked, 'What will the owner of the vineyard do?'

'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,' came the reply. 'Then he will rent the vineyard out to other tenants who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.'

Some who heard this said, 'God forbid.'

Jesus looked at them and asked, 'What does it mean when it states (and he then quoted Psalm 118:22), "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; anyone the stone falls on will be crushed.'

The chief priests and teachers of the law wanted Jesus arrested right away as He had spoken this parable about them. But they were afraid the people would stop them as they thought Jesus was a prophet.