

## A Special Role for the Mennonite People

One of you has recently asked me how I would "interpret" Matt. 21:33-45. Like so many passages in the Brit Chadasha (the Renewed Covenant Scriptures), it cannot be understood without going back to the Law and the prophets for the background of Yeshua's parable of the vineyard. This parable has some profound subtleties that are only unlocked by examining to what Yeshua and the Apostles referred to as "The Scriptures." And it's a good question.

No one would disagree that the farmer in the parable is YHWH and that the vineyard is Yisrael. When YHWH sent Israel the prophets of old, the general response was that they were rejected and even killed. The Son in the parable was Yeshua ha Moshiach, the Redeemer and Savior of Yisrael who was sent by YHWH to His own people and was also rejected by them. Thus far the parable hardly needs "Interpretation" if it needs interpretation at all. Moreover, it should be emphasized the Yeshua came to His own people, those who had been set apart by YHWH, who knew themselves to be the chosen people, and who believed that when ha Moshiach came it would be for them. Yet for all that, they were unable to recognize their Redeemer and Savior. This should be a warning for us as Mennonite people that we too, despite our heritage, could just as easily fail to recognize YHWH's messengers prior to His coming again.

The key verse in the parable is, ["Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of YHWH shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it."](#) The term "nation" or "people" means "tribe" or "a group from the same company or race" (see Strong's Greek #1484). An alternate translation could well be, "given to a future generation" of the same people. The future generation that Yeshua said would inherit the kingdom was not the church or a different nation. Those who teach or believe that Yisrael has been replaced by the Church are effectively saying that YHWH has permanently rejected Yisrael as His chosen people, or worse yet that YHWH is unfaithful to His promises. We know however, from the prophets that in the later days all the tribes of Yisrael will be called out from among the nation and receive their inheritance as YHWH's reigning people in Yahushua's kingdom. The future generation of Yisrael will return to YHWH and His Torah and be "fruitful" servants in YHWH's earthly kingdom. This is the destiny of Yisrael according to the Law and the prophets. That Yeshua was not referring to a rejection of Yisrael is made clear at the end of the parable for, ["when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that He spoke about them."](#) Those who exercised "headship" for Yisrael were being rejected.

There are some profound subtleties in Yeshua's parable. For the kingdom was indeed removed from Yahuda for a long season and given to Ephraim. This is in keeping with the prophecy, ["The scepter shall not depart from Yahuda nor a lawgiver between his feet, until Shiloh comes; to Him shall the gathering of the nations be."](#) (Beresheeth 49:10). At Yeshua's (Shiloh's) coming, the scepter or the right to rule was to be taken from Yahuda and transferred to Ephraim. The

prophets, ancient authorities and present teachers agree that the transfer was specifically to the tribe of Gad. This transfer included not just the right to rule but also the right to judge right from wrong according to the Law.

"Blessed be he that enlarges Gad: he dwells as a lion (or ruler), and tears the arm with the crown of the head (royalty). And he provided the best part for himself, because there, the portion of the Torah giver was hidden; and he came with the heads of the people. The righteousness of YHWH he did, and His right-rulings with Yisrael." (Devarim / Deut. 33:20-21). This is historically fulfilled.

After Yeshua's death, the tribe of Yahuda lost its authority or right to rule within the tribes of Yisrael, and the Romans brought an end to Yahuda as the last remnant of the Davidic kingdom. From then on the scepter went with Ephraim and was manifested in the great political powers such as Great Britain and the United States (or Ephraim and Manasseh). "The rich Jewish banking families of the world may still hold the scepter (or the kingdom) in some sense, but sadly, our brothers in Orthodox Judah do not understand that they no longer have the right to set Halacha (the "Way" you should walk), as that was taken away from them at the time they rejected Yeshua; and the knowledge was "hidden" from them." (quoted *Nazarene Israel* by Norman B. Willis).

In conclusion, the parable of the vineyard in Matt. 21:33-45 cannot be understood without the background of the Law and the prophets. The parable in no way suggests that YHWH has or ever will reject Yisrael as His chosen people or replaced them with the church any other group. The inheritance of all Yisrael is the right to rule with Yeshua. And finally, if you believe with me that many of us of the Mennonite people are from the tribe Gad, we are to have a very special role in our Father's coming kingdom. Let us not reject the truth we are given as we Yisraelites have been so prone to do in the past. Let us instead recognize our calling as Yisraelites and prepare ourselves to be fruitful in YHWH's kingdom.

Shalom