

The Landlord and the Tenants according to Jesus

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[0 : 00] Yes, it is the parable, it's usually called the parable of the wicked tenants, although I should unfold it a bit today.

I think it's misnamed often, I think some things in the elements in the scriptures are misnamed. Last week we attempted, if you'll recall, if you're here, a survey of the New Testament.

A kind of look at the whole. This, of course, presupposes that there is a whole to be seen.

And belief believes there is. That's what belief does, it believes. The New Testament is meant to be together. It is an intended group of writings, of books, which are intended to be read as a book.

Again, unbelief denies this quite reasonably enough from unbelief's point of view. They are seeing these books as disparate writings, arbitrarily brought together by a first or second century religious group for its own purposes.

[1 : 15] That would be the approach, roughly speaking, in a religious studies program regarding the New Testament. But again, belief, belief sees them as having a unity around a center called, in the world of faith, the Christian faith, the apostolic witness.

A witness to Jesus. And specifically, and it's great to remember this at the Easter season, this Jesus risen from the dead.

The Lord of our faith. The New Testament, as we were talking about this last week, is an Easter book. It happened because God commanded it to happen as part of the mystery of salvation, which was revealed in and as Jesus risen.

Hallelujah. He is risen. So that was last week. Today, as advertised, we will look at just a small part of this book, the New Testament.

A parable told by Jesus and reported in the Synoptic Gospels. All three of them. So it's remembered well in the first community of our faith.

[2 : 40] Chosen because in its own way, as we'll see as we go through it, it is in turn a survey of Hebrew scripture, all of it, or most of it.

What Christians call, a survey of the Hebrew scripture, again, what Christians call the Old Testament. So it's a parable of the whole, we'll call it.

So we'll consider these things as we go. But first, of course, before we read and ponder the New Testament, so we're told to do in the New Testament, we should pray.

So let's just say a word of prayer together before we begin. Lord, we have your word in front of us today. May it give us the strength of mind and heart to ponder it as we should, to understand it as we should.

And may it give us that deep peace which the gospel promises as we gather around the risen one, Jesus, the one who taught this parable, the one who brings peace to us and to his people and to the world.

[3 : 55] And we ask this indeed in his name. Amen. So, just a quick look at this parable.

It begins, here another parable, the Lord says. We'll put this in context in a minute. There was a householder who planted a vineyard, set a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, built a tower, let it out to tenants, went into another country.

When the season of fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, stoned another. Again, he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did the same to them.

And afterward, he sent his son to them, saying, They will respect my son. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, This is the heir.

Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance. And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. When, therefore, the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?

[5 : 05] They said to him, You will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their season. Jesus said to them, Have you never read in the scriptures the very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner?

This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.

When the chief priests and Pharisees heard this parable, they perceived that he was speaking about them. But when they tried to arrest him, they feared the multitudes because they held him to be a prophet.

The parable of the wicked tenants. Wicked indeed, weren't they? Here another parable. The Lord told many parables, didn't he? Just a little bit of context here will help.

Context usually does as we approach a passage in Holy Scripture. Matthew has told us, just before this parable happens, he's told us of the parable teacher's entry into Jerusalem with a noted measure of popular acclaim.

[6 : 27] Then, Jesus enters the temple and forcibly evicts some people therefrom. Noted, we may be sure, by the proverbial powers that be.

Then, next, a famous moment in Matthew's Gospel, a fig tree is cursed by Jesus, presumably a sign of intending judgment.

His disciples, again, they take note of this. But just broadly speaking, there's one more little incident here, I'll come back to it later. It's hopefully more appropriate. But what leads up to this parable is then again, entry into Jerusalem, famous Palm Sunday moment.

Jesus goes into the temple and he cleanses it, some sort of prophetic action in the temple. Then there's the cursing of the fig tree incident, leading into this parable.

Then, Jewish leaders ask Jesus an obvious question, by what authority are you acting? In effect, he's asking them, they ask him, who are you?

[7 : 40] And famously, you'll recall, Jesus refuses to directly answer, but asks these questioners a tricky question. Jesus could do that at times, couldn't he?

He asks them a tricky question about their response to John the Baptist. He brings up that topic. Jesus says to them, what's his ministry from heaven or no?

And it's explained to us that if they say from heaven, Jesus will ask them why they apparently rejected his witness, that is, the witness of John the Baptist.

If they say they do indeed reject John's witness, they will lose the crowd's sympathy, we're told. Something they are, these leaders, counting on for other purposes, sinister purposes.

So they won't answer. So Jesus won't answer. But now, our parable happens. Which is presumably an answer to this question.

- [8 : 47] The question being again, by what authority are you doing with these things? Who are you? It's a pregnant, significant moment in Matthew's Gospel.
- Then, again, this parable, the wicked tenant. Here, another parable Jesus says. It would appear, did you find it so as we read through it?
- It would appear to be a straightforward story, this parable. Very straightforward. And I suppose it is a straightforward parable.
- Matthew tells us, right at the end, verse 45 and 46, he tells us that the Pharisees and others, high priests and others, they understood it without benefit of a commentator.
- It was very clear to them what he was teaching. Very clear. So, let's unpack, in obvious ways, let's unpack the parable to get more out of it.
- [9 : 48] Just briefly, we will name the players, if I may call them that in this parable. Name the players, and just so we know who's who up here in this parable.
- This is, for the most part, without controversy. Of course, early on in the parable, right there at the top, we're told about a householder. The householder is Israel's God, without a doubt.
- Then we're told about a vineyard, right at the second line up there. The vineyard, of course, is Israel. Isaiah chapter 5 is seen here as background.
- It's also probably echoes of Exodus chapter 15. It's a very poignant framework for this parable. Isaiah 5 is a love song sung to Israel by the one who gave her freedom and placed her in safety.
- It was meant to be a place which bore fruit. Bore fruit in justice and praise and gratitude. So the vineyard was meant to be.
- [10 : 59] Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard begins. Isaiah chapter 5. A beautiful place honoring Israel's God.
- Israel is Adam and Eve.
- In a sense, returned to the garden. With a law in her midst. As Adam and Eve were so placed in a beautiful place with a law.
- The Torah, you know, the first five books of Hebrew scripture are often called from a garden to a garden. That's the story of the Torah.
- Eden is the promised land. Eden was the vineyard in which Adam and Eve lived. Sort of deeper background to this story. Israel, therefore, the fruitful vineyard of the Lord.
- [12 : 04] It bears fruit, we're told. That verse 34 in this parable. It bears fruit in season. That would echo for the people here.
- Jewish people love to do this. That is an echo of Psalm number 1. Almost certainly. Bearing fruit in its season, you'll recall. The one who loves the law of the Lord.
- Psalm 1, verse 3. When the season of fruit drew near, as we're told in this parable. So the people of Israel gathered around the law meant to bear fruit in the vineyard of the Lord.
- Given to them by this vineyard owner, the householder. A hedge, we're told in the parable. A hedge surrounds the vineyard.
- It's a beautiful place. Even in the second line you see up there, a hedge is mentioned. It is, therefore, a protected, set-apart place. I have no authority for this, but perhaps there's an echo here of Job.
- [13 : 08] Remember, Satan in that drama drew attention to the fact that Job was protected by his God. Hast thou not put a hedge about him?
- The evil one said to Israel's God about that Job, his servant. The hedge. God loves his people. Sets a hedge around them.

There is a wine press in the parable as well. This, the learned one, tell us. I'm sure they've got this correct.

The wine press in the parable is the altar in the temple. That's the altar. The temple is the watchtower. So we're told by, it seems to be a consensus.

There's not controversy about these things. Then, of course, we're told about these servants that the householder sends to the vineyard. The servants are obviously prophets sent to Israel, sent to the vineyard.

[14 : 13] Last but not least, at least in terms of the major players in this parable, we have the tenants. The tenants, well, they equal Israel.

Or, more precisely, they equal Israel's leaders. On that identification, much might turn.

So you want to be very careful there. No one be hasty in reading the parable. There is the question implicit there in that identification is, is this parable, which speaks obviously of judgment, is it judgment, quote, on Israel?

Or is it a judgment within Israel? We Gentiles must remember we're listening to a Jew talking to other Jews. We're outsiders here right now.

Jew talking to other Jews. Jew talking to other Jews. The parable would appear to be, what shall we call it again, in general terms, as we said in the introduction.

[15 : 21] Is this the whole story of Israel? I think it is almost the whole story of Israel. Or is it a central strand of the whole story? Or a warning, perhaps, that this might be, or has become, Israel's story?

There are little nuances of difference there. What are we reading here? But on with the story, with this parable.

Obviously this parable is, I think, virtually synonymous with allegory. Each thing represents something. The householder sends his servants to the vineyard to receive benefits from his planting.

Reasonable enough, for sure. This is a straightforward story. The tenants, or the stewards we might call them, perhaps in modernity we'd call them the on-site managers, they act most strangely, don't they?

They reject the servants of the householder. Some kind of what we might call shareholders' revolt is underway here. It could almost be a parable told in France these days, where workers grab their managers and treat them poorly.

[16 : 39] So now, the owner, the householder, sends, and you can't help but comment here, perhaps strangely, he sends more servants.

He sends more servants. And they receive, in turn, a brutal reception. The parable makes it quite clear. Death, rejection, stoning are all mentioned.

The persistence here. We just note the obvious here. Noting the obvious that's on the surface of this parable. Was it C.S. Lewis somewhere said, you can't be subtle until you've grasped the obvious.

What if he used to say that to his students? You know, students get subtle about things. Please, please grab the obvious first. Note the obvious. The owner household, again, has sent these servants time and time again, and they receive brutal reception.

The persistence of this vineyard owner knows no bounds. That's the obvious here. The owner of this vineyard loves the vineyard so much.

[17 : 51] He cares about it so much. Wants it to flourish so much. His love seems to know no bounds. So we're told that now he decides, against all logic, one would think, he decides to send his son, if you can imagine.

An odd thing to do, given the circumstances. They will respect, he reasons. So reasons this owner, if we can call it that.

They will respect my son, he says, at verse 37 up here. They will respect my son. This is why I said it at the opening.

I think you could argue, it's not a big point. You could say that this parable is radically misnamed. It could be called the parable of the mad with love for his vineyard householder.

It's a parable about an owner of a property he's mad about. He loves it. A strange householder is on display here. It's reason to ponder, if not to wonder at this story, what's on the surface.

[19 : 00] This householder behaves very strangely. The son will be sent. Note two things here, just here about this.

This is Matthew's gospel. And this gospel rarely sounds, we talked about this a bit last week, when we did an overview of all the different parts of the New Testament.

Matthew rarely sounds like John's gospel. There is, of course, Matthew 11, you'll recall, where we hear something like, we don't hear something like, we do hear Jesus saying, no one knows the Father except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

That kind of thing is sometimes called Johannine lightning, showing up here and there in the synoptics. It's rare. It's rare for a synoptic gospel to sound like John.

The persistence of the owner is indeed, in the discussion time you can tell me if I'm misreading this, the persistence of the owner is the persistence of love.

[20 : 12] Here we have a narrative form, something like, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. Yes.

God sends his Son to a wayward world. And the parable, I must give credit here, I had never seen this before.

Marcus Bachmiel has written a bit about this parable in another context. I had never seen this until I read it in Professor Marcus Bachmiel, I used to teach at Learners Exchange, teaches at Oxford now.

The parable contains a most devastating detail, the learned Marcus points out, if we just have, simply have eyes to see it. The tenants, we're told in this parable, the tenants recognize the Son.

Think about that detail, that Jesus is telling, the tenants recognize him. They say, this is the heir.

[21 : 18] This guy's different. He's not a servant or a prophet. He belongs to the householder. He's the heir. This is, what the learned ones call, a high Christology, sitting there, in Matthew's Gospel.

If you've seen me, says Jesus in John, you've seen the Father. Indeed, says Matthew. We talked last week a bit about the synoptics and how different they are from John.

Indeed, there is real difference. The difference doesn't run too, too deep. They're also talking about the same Jesus, the high Christologies there, different forms.

That's the way John, John's Gospel, has our Lord speaking. If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. So in Matthew, it's, that's the heir. That's the Son.

Here he comes. Is it true, some philosophers think it is, that there are some things, I always found this idea very intriguing, and I think true, but again, in the discussion time, you can tell me, there are some things that you cannot not know.

[22 : 33] Some philosophers insist that that's true. There are some things you cannot not know. That point raised by way of asking, is this implicit in the teaching of Jesus here?

When the source of our being, the holy source of our being, the one to whom we owe deep reverence and gratitude, when he makes himself known, is it finally possible not to know that he's made himself known?

I think that's what this parable is teaching. Our Lord was smarter than the philosophers on his whisper that. He knew what they knew long before they knew it.

I think they know something. This is the heir. the heir. See, the tenants are without excuse. They really are.

They knew it was the heir. That's the householder's son. The tenants are without excuse. The vineyard stewards, again, they say, this is the heir.

[23 : 45] They know him. Almost here, we might think, this gets into broader interpretation, obviously, almost here, we might think that Matthew wants us to see unbelief is perhaps beyond our conception.

We'll never really have conceptual clarity about what drives unbelief. It's a great mystery. Why people behave the way they do.

The son reveals the father, but nevertheless, rejection happens. Rejection happens. We might press another question here and ask, is this rejection, according to Matthew's gospel, is this rejection that we're looking at, is it ultimate or is it perhaps penultimate?

I told you that there's one little incident, one little bit of Matthew's gospel that I didn't put in the context. context. There's the entry, there's the cleansing of the temple, there's the fig tree cursing.

Just before this parable, Matthew records that our Lord told this little story to Pharisees and others that he was in conversation with here.

[25 : 10] He told the little story, do you recall it, you will? There was a father who had two sons, Jesus said, and both sons were asked to go and do some work for the father.

It's an interesting little story that Jesus tells here. One son said, no, no way, dad, I'm not going to do it. But, later on, he did obey the father.

And the other son said immediately to his father when asked to do some little task for his father, yes, I'll do it. Okay, okay, dad. And then he didn't obey, he didn't go. He didn't go.

Matthew knows, this kind of issue about belief and unbelief and records it in the parables of Jesus.

Some are called who initially reject and then they obey and others who initially seem to obey, then they reject. Again, that little incident, that little story, that little bit of teaching is just before this, our parable.

[26 : 16] Matthew knows, it seems to me, I'm jumping to big conclusions here now, but I'll put it out there. Matthew knows the kind of issue that is raised in Romans 9, 10, and 11, just to put it bluntly.

Why is there unbelief? Why did Israel so largely engage in unbelief? Paul was interested in this to no end.

Why is unbelief, why is it so powerful a fact about humans? Augustine thought about himself in this regard a lot.

He once said in the Confessions, he says, I became a great question to myself. when the gospel started to work at him.

Human beings are very, very complicated. It's hard to understand people like us. I became a great question to myself.

[27 : 30] The parable, of course, lives in the story of Israel, explicitly here. it lives, if you will, in the story of Israel.

At Passover, Israel sang, amongst other things, Psalm 118 at Passover. And that psalm talks about, it's right here, a quote from Psalm 118 from our Lord.

That psalm talks about stones being overlooked by estate builders and, surprise, the overlooked stone becomes, in the end, the chief cornerstone.

So, Jesus, according to Matthew, tells or witnesses to Israel's leaders that their part in the drama of Israel, their part in the pattern of scripture, is here in Psalm 118.

There, it is discernible. And at this point, you've got to draw back and just say, again, note the obvious. This is a fierce suggestion for Jesus to make to these people.

[28 : 52] This is, in fact, a fierce parable. This is dynamite. You're in the story, Jesus is saying to the leaders of Israel, you're in the story.

You're right there in Psalm 118. All Bible, all scripture reading is here, I think, made known to us.

And it's a solemn and severe warning to us as readers of scripture. We read as actors reading a divine script, if you will.

and we are judged as we discern who we are in the drama. Do you recognize yourselves?

The Lord is saying to the leaders of Israel here in this parable, do you recognize yourselves as in Psalm 118? King? They obviously would have said no.

[29 : 57] He says, well, if you knew yourselves and you knew the scriptures, you'd know that's who you are. What a devastating comment. A fierce parable indeed.

How do we read this parable as in Matthew, as it's told again in the synoptics. Wow, it's hot stuff, this parable.

Jesus tells the whole story of Israel in this form, this dynamite form. The parable, of course, this parable might be situated further, if you will.

it was written almost certainly we can say, it was written from the perspective of someone, this Matthew, in a Christian gathering.

He believes in Jesus. It is written post-Easter. The whole gospel is there. It's a post-Easter story.

[31 : 00] I think it's probably situated in Palestine. Probably it is. We talk about last week. The New Testament has four gospels, a bridge to 13 Paulines, and then it leads into probably a number of books which are Johannine, three of them.

The other is Hebrews, Jude, James, 1 and 2 Peter. We can safely situate them in Palestinian Christianity, leading to an apocalypse which ends the book.

This Matthew's gospel, the four can be situated on that spectrum too. Matthew's gospel looks like it does to a lot of scholars. Nothing you don't have to believe this or not, but it might be helpful as background.

It is for me sometimes. This parable and Matthew's gospel looks like it could be part of a church synagogue conversation. Post-Easter, the church forming itself and growing, and here's how the church identifies her lord and asks people still in the synagogue, still perhaps worshipping at the temple.

If this is pre-70 AD, it's post-70 AD, the temple's in ruin, and then the story becomes another kind of story. It's so interesting.

[32 : 21] Who is the teller of this parable? where, in a sense, is the teller of this parable? You see, there's a kind of reading, if you will, where evangelicals and we take scripture so seriously, that's what we always say, we're kind of getting familiar with these kind of things.

There is reading within the parable, in a sense, and there's a kind of reading outside the parable, and you can do both as a Christian. The church as a whole is called to do all sorts of sophisticated readings.

Theologically, of course, the parable teller has been raised from the dead. And I think Matthew would say to us, I think Matthew's a Palestinian Christian, lives amongst the Jewish people, he loves them, he would say, I think the parable teller has been raised from the dead, and that fact vindicates this parable.

If he hadn't been raised from the dead, this parable would be nonsense, arrogant, derogatory nonsense about Israel. But this parable teller was raised from the dead, therefore this parable has been vindicated by the resurrection.

It isn't true standing alone, it's true because the parable teller has been raised from the dead. Nothing else could vindicate such a parable.

[33 : 50] It is, again, a fierce story. Even, I think we could say this, and we can say this on the basis of other things in the canon, this is why reading the whole canon is so important for the church.

For some Christians, old and new, this could be a very dangerous story. Paul knew naive believers. that's one reason, again, that he wrote what we call Romans 9, 10, and 11.

You remember that Paul goes out of his way in Romans to say, you Gentiles must never exalt yourselves over Israel, however you understand Israel, he said to him.

You must never exalt yourselves over Israel. He warns against this, stand in awe, he says. Romans 11, verse 20.

Stand in awe. That might be a great word of commentary on this kind of parable. Do not become proud as you read scripture.

[35 : 02] Read it in humility. Read it as a canonical whole. Let one part speak to another. Our whole story, the canon, that we looked at last week, is needed to read this parable with some measure of maturity as Christians.

So we need to know our whole story, as we had an overview of our whole story last week, as we looked at the whole canon, as we seek to understand the whole story of Israel, as Jesus tells it in this parable, parable.

It manifestly is a big telling of the story of Israel. parable. This parable, again, is in all three synoptics, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

It's remembered widely. It's remembered at crucial, at least in Matthew's gospel, at a crucial time of pivotal change in the life of Jesus.

It's also interesting to note. I just noticed this two days ago. I don't have no authority for this. This is so interesting. This parable is remembered in the book of Acts, as Stephen gives his famous sermon before he stoned to death.

[36 : 36] This could be a troubling parable. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute, says Stephen? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the righteous one.

whom you have now betrayed and murdered. There's a summary of this parable in the book of Acts, according to Stephen. Stephen, you heard last week, from that Palestinian Christianity, that Jerusalem centered Christianity.

This parable, again, is remembered richly in the New Testament, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets.

who said that? Paul, 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 15, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets. There's another tight little summary of this parable.

We find it in the Synoptics, in the Stephen Circle in Jerusalem. We find it, Paul tells it again in concentrated form to Christians in Thessalonica.

[37 : 49] This parable and readings of it made its way around the whole spectrum of early Christianity. It's that important. There you have it.

Parables, just in conclusion, parables are, they combine narrative and metaphor with brevity. Narrative, metaphor, brevity.

But how much they can contain. What punch is in them. Jesus' parables, says one scholar, John Meyer, I'm editing him down here, they tease the mind.

They throw its hearers off balance. They are not, he says, rather punchy and surely true. They're not pretty Sunday school stories. They are troubling riddles.

They destroy false sense, any false sense of security. He says that they are characterized by, isn't this the truth, radical reversal.

[39 : 02] You, leaders, you are in the scriptures. You're in Psalm 118. you're the leaders who become the enemies. Great reversal.

Lest we read that in a kind of Christian triumphalism, we remember that Paul, the Jew, the Pharisee, tells Gentiles, don't exalt yourselves.

Israel's unbelief is a mystery. You must stand in awe. You must remain humble. And surely that's a good word for reading all of scripture and reading any part of scripture.

As last week we looked at again, the whole. And today we look at a punchy little parable that tells the story of the whole story of Israel. The more you look at the scriptures, the more wondrous they get, the more amazing they get.

But also more challenging, more, they should humble us. We should pray to be teachable and humble indeed in the presence of holy scripture, shouldn't we?

[40 : 08] We read this in prayer. If we're casual and hasty as we read, we'll become fools. We must read and believe in deep humility.

That's the gravity, the main thing I wanted to say today. People know more about these things than I do. so. That's what I wanted to share about this parable, this misnamed parable.

It's the parable of God so loved the world that he sent his son. That's how much you are loved today. Receive him into the vineyard of your life.

If I may be an allegorist. Let me say a closing word of prayer and then a conversation. Lord, we thank you for your word and we confess that we have so much to learn.

So make us good learners that you can be proud of. Help us, Lord, to receive your word as you want us to receive it and grow in the mystery of your salvation.

[41 : 15] To you, the risen one. You, the risen one. To you, we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Everyone is so quiet. An ominous quiet. came over the crowd. Yes, yes, yes, sir.

A very minor question. Oh, please, I like minor questions. But this parable is told, you said, in the three of the gospels. Yes. Mark, Luke, and... Matthew, Mark, Luke, yeah.

The one in Luke seems to be a little different than the three servants sent. They killed one in Luke. Yeah. But not in the other two. Is there any significance to that?

Yeah. Well, you tell me. I don't know. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Some are pretty well the same, and others are different.

[42 : 40] Is it because of the gospel? Yeah. Yeah. Well, one response is, I guess, it goes to the issue of memory. It's not the only issue here, but our Lord probably told parables, the same parable, many different, with variations.

That's why the Lord's prayers has variations in it, because he told it in different ways, different occasions. But, I mean, if you, there's probably, probably, and I'll go right to the heart of it, as I understand it.

I think the Spirit made the gospels as complicated and wondrous as they are for a reason, that if we probe and probe and probe, we can actually see the early church struggling to be mature in its remembering of Jesus.

So, you might see variations that reflect different circumstances. I did make a note of saying that Mark says at the end, give the vineyard to others, as does Luke, give the vineyard to others.

Matthew more poignantly says to a nation who will bear the fruit of it. There's a difference there. The others stay sort of neutral, doesn't it?

[43 : 54] So, there may be something to be learned from these variations. That's all I can say. That's, I'm sure Dr. Pack can give a better answer than that. But I love the variations, and they've created an industry for scholars.

There are libraries and books about the tradition formation, the Germans love it. How did the apostolic witness get remembered orally?

What was its earliest formation in writing? Can we discern this from the Gospels? And then how do we see it forming in narrative form, different narrative forms?

Can we discern the setting from this? What are the rhetorical strategies of each Gospel writer? Do they have various different colors in their theology?

There are libraries of books about this. And in heaven we'll find out that maybe 95% of it was fantasy. But it's rich.

[44 : 54] Jim, please correct me here. No, not correct. Sorry, just add. There are two other factors which are part of the equation, if I may just mention them.

one is that the Lord did his teaching, fulfilled his ministry in Aramaic. Yes.

And all the versions of his ministry, I mean, his words that we have are translations. Right, of course. Well, I've done some translation work, and there are often subtle questions of emphasis, which are there in one language, easily and naturally expressed in the words that we use.

And you have to play around a little and fiddle with the words in the receptor language into which you're translating the original, in order to get those nuances and thrusts of meaning.

That is constantly, I think, a factor as we read the Bible, to be remembered as we read the Gospels. Obviously, the Gospel writers were working with the oral accounts of Jesus' teaching that they heard, as well as with any, well, and there certainly were some written accounts, people, I mean, who before them had tried to string together in Greek the teaching of Jesus.

[46 : 41] Then there's a second factor, and that is that each of the Gospel writers has his own, how can I say, his own perspective on Christ and the Gospel of Christ, that he wants his Gospel to embody and project.

And that inevitably bears, must have all been, on the precise way in which rendering Jesus' meaning in Greek.

Greek. They express it. I think myself that Mark came first. It's a general view, not an animus view.

And I think that Luke and Matthew both had Mark in front of them as one of their sources. scholars have sometimes said, oh, you wouldn't expect that if Matthew, the Matthew who wrote the Gospel, was really Matthew, Levi, that is, the Apostle.

[48 : 09] Again and again, they remember details that I've forgotten. And I think that that's what Matthew was doing with Mark as he composed his Gospel, stressing as he does, you know, Jesus is the Messiah, fulfilling all the hopes of Israel.

The Savior would come, the new order would appear, and so forth. So, there are two more factors just to remember.

Oh, please. there's a campus that sort of came out at me when looking at overhead and that there's standing house called Phoebe Trees where Phoebe Vanda took the water and he referred to Joe.

Tell us what you think it might mean. I don't... I would... what I would feel like. Just to get some knowing. To anybody?

Okay. Perry? But before we come back to Janice, we think about hedges. Perry, did you have your hand up? I used to be an auctioneer. I'm just kidding. Yeah. I mean, the contemporary application of this era, if we take the culture to which we belong, we're eager to harvest the fruit of the vineyard, but we're loath to acknowledge the owner of the vineyard.

[51 : 13] Is that the way humans are supposed to behave? Because we're not agreeing about the owner, but we're very anxious for the fruit.

The more I thought about it, it perplexed me. So you're right. Does it have universal application? I kept thinking about this householder who sends his son to be with these.

He'll still come up to them and have dealings with them. So you're universalizing Harry, and I appreciate that. Yeah. Humanity thinks it now owns.

And someone pointed out by 1967 in Montreal, it was man and his world. We'd taken over. Get out, householder. We run this show now.

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But they don't think so. But there is a mystery of unbelief there that I think is just startling to try and figure out. You're right, Harry, so were you going almost in an ecological direction?

You're politically correct, Harry. That was very good though. Pardon me? Yeah, I mean, yeah, humanity's destroying this vineyard. It could go there, I guess. In the church, it seems to be in this position at the moment where it's very anxious to retain what religion teaches, but not who teaches it.

[53 : 38] And then you can separate the religion of the church from the person of the owner of the vineyard. attracted owner of the vineyard.

Why do we as human beings want to do that and insist on doing it? It's very strange. There's human history.

I became a great question to myself. That's what the gospel does to people. These vineyard owners needed to question themselves. So is Jesus appealing to that by quoting Psalm 118?

Remember, in the story, there are people who get it completely wrong. You might be those people. He's saying to them. Isn't he, I think?

Very. well, and Jesus reference to John the Baptist. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, already you've been in this drama. I just think it's interesting on TV right now the new religious series, either PBS or Knowledge Network, and one of the lines in there is, if we don't play God, who knows?

[54 : 57] And I just shook my head at that and thought, what is that? So they're going to explore different religions and points of view, but I just thought that was not a thing to say.

Just to really get me asking the trouble. Used to be that what human beings do.

You didn't hear about the hedge. Oh, yeah, Jane, you're on now, because no one's offering a hedge comment. Probably not that startling, but I'm sure that people have thought of it, that I believe that God gave the commandments to the people of Israel to protect them.

And God said, if you do these things, you'll be blessed, you'll be cursed, you'll be cursed. And Job was somebody who was righteous, according to the story, and Satan said to God.

So I just wondered if we can put ourselves into that story. If we live, if we can't go out and put a hedge on that.

[56 : 17] I just wanted to tell you. And what does that mean? Yeah. Yes, Israel's God loves these people.

That's shockingly present in the story. The hedge, the place of sacrifice, sending the servants, sending the son, sending the heir.

Remarkable. Are we? Yes. Are we, I mean, maybe in our, the present crisis that we're in, that we're trying to, we're trying to get back our hedge.

You know, we're, to make the, what the Bible says important, it's true and to take that back.

That's our hedge. One of the commandments that are there. And the fact that our culture wants to dismiss it and relativize everything is, makes us open to, to call apart.

[57 : 47] I mean, both for the church and for us individually. I don't know. Well, that's really important but we're on, yeah.

We're trying to get it back. But it's not, it seems like we're having to go into a battle of the do it.

I don't think this is relevant but I just read Robert across the poem about the ending wall.

He would go on and talk about how he walks down and never sees where these holes in the wall occur, but they need maintenance all the time. And that expression gives you sense.

And it tends to make it make it better. It's better less than it's not. But it's better. the United States is divergent.

[58 : 47] I just feel that's very well. No, that's good. I think every little this is the heir, come let us kill him and have his inheritance.

That's another echo of the Psalter and other places in Scripture work. Israel is called God's inheritance. These echoes of hedge, inheritance, the temple, the altar, probably Psalm 1 in its season, the law of the Lord.

These are meant to build into the story. This is the whole story of Israel. The wisdom literature is here. The story of the prophets. Give me a deep echo of Adam and Eve in the garden because they're the first part of the drama.

In a beautiful place with the law. They're expelled from the garden. Then when the Torah ends, Israel's back in a promised land with the law.

So they are Adam and Eve over again. and they're called upon to obey the law and if they don't they're expelled from the garden as Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden.

[60 : 03] So this is the ongoing story of Israel and the world. So this does tell the whole story. I think the whole whole story. It tells the whole story by it's an open-ended story I take it.

the story of Israel and the church is open-ended. It's not over yet. The Bible tells us that. We still have to identify ourselves somewhere on the spectrum of where we're going to be in the story.

So we can't be innocent readers. I take it. Good sir. It's interesting in Revelations where if the landowner takes to stand off the vineyard to cause them to be in trying to give us bad dreams?

Yes. Yes. So who's on next week, Bill?

Oh, great. Great. Thanks for your patience over two weeks now.

[61 : 33] That's a lot for the saints. The whole Bible of the whole morning for morning for night. Here's good.