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BROOKLYN
TABERNACLE

BIBLE STUDY ON

WICKED VINE-DRESSERS.

Matthew 21:33-46—Aug. 16.
"The Stone that the builders rejected, the
name is become the Head of the corner."—
Matthew 21:42.

NOT only did the Redeemer teach chiefly by parables, but nearly all of those parables related to the Kingdom. The reason for this is plain. The Divine Plan calls for the setting up of the Kingdom of Righteousness by Divine Power for the overcoming of the Prince of Darkness, whose reign of six thousand years has been a Reign of Sin and Death. Today's lesson points indirectly to the Kingdom.

While the whole world lay in sin and under Divine sentence of death, God planted in the world a root of Promise, a hope. This Promise, made to Abraham, foretold that his seed would eventually become very powerful and would cause God's blessing to fill the earth and roll away the curse. In due time this Promise came to the nation of Israel, Abraham's posterity and heirs of the Promise.

Thus God planted a vineyard in the world, the Jewish nation, bound to Him by their Law Covenant. He set a hedge about them—the Divine promise that as long as they were faithful and loyal to God, they would be thoroughly protected against their enemies. Jehovah Himself was their Watch-tower. He placed as watchmen the Prophets, who warned the people in respect to every breaking down of the wall; for this protection could be broken down only by disloyalty, carelessness, sin, on Israel's part.

The Original Vine-Dressers.

While the entire nation of Israel is represented by the vineyard, the husbandmen were the religious leaders. These vine-dressers became conceited and acted as if they were the owners, and not merely the Owner's servants. Even in their speech they became accustomed to call the people "our people," "my people," etc. Thus they failed to glorify God properly, and felt themselves to be more than the servants of God, honored in being permitted to be vine-dressers in His vineyard.

In due time the Owner, Jehovah, sent His servants, the Prophets, to Israel. These servants and their messages became tests of the loyalty of the vine-dressers and of the character-development of the people. But alas! the vine-dressers' pride and desire to show off before the people prompted the mistreatment of the Prophets. Some of the servants they beat, others they stoned, others they killed.

Finally the Owner sent His Son. The Bible informs us that God fore-knew that Israel's rulers would crucify the Son. But the parable states the matter as though the Owner had said, "They will reverence My Son." Surely the Jewish rulers should have recognized Him of whom people declared, "Never man spake like this Man." Surely they should have hearkened to His Message, should have repented of their sins and come back through Him into harmony with God.

However, the spirit of selfishness and self-conceit often leads its possessors to monstrous acts which afterward appal even themselves. The Jewish Doctors, clergy of that time, perverted that Jesus, the Son of God, Representative of the Owner of the vineyard, exerted a mighty influence over the people. They reasoned that to whatever extent His cause should prevail, their power, their influence, their titles, their honors of men, would fade.

In their exasperation against Jesus, the vine-dressers determined that His death was necessary for the success of their theories and plans. They did not realize that their course was the very one which would lead to the destruction of that typical kingdom of God, that typical vineyard. The parable was fulfilled. God's Judgment

The Stone that the builders rejected, came upon the Jewish nation. In A.D. 70 it was overthrown, and has never since been restored, nor will it be until Messiah shall establish His Kingdom.

The New Vine-Dressers.

The Lord said that they were wicked vine-dressers. He appointed new ones—the twelve Apostles, St. Paul taking the place of Judas. Moreover, He started a new vineyard, putting into it only the true Vine. Of this vineyard our Lord said, "I am the Vine; ye are the branches." Century after century these true branches of the true Vine have been planted by baptism into death with their Master and have been bringing forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Ere long, we believe, this fruitage will all be gathered and, by the resurrection "change," be transplanted into Heavenly conditions.

The Scriptures also represent the Church by a pyramid, which has five corner-stones, the chief one of which, the top-stone, is itself a perfect pyramid. Jesus, rejected by the Jews, crucified, is the Chief Corner-Stone of this great Temple of God, the Church. Already He is glorified, and His Church will soon be united to Him.

LACKING KNOWLEDGE
GOD'S PEOPLE PERISH"My People Are Destroyed For
Lack of Knowledge."

Jesus' Teachings Harmonized the Law and the Prophets—Jewish Doctors Had Failed to Teach the Deep Things of the Law—Opposition to Bible Study—Jews Typical of Spiritual Israel—Jewish Age and Harvest Typical of Gospel Age and Harvest.

August 9.—The Photo-Drama of Creation continues to awaken deep interest in Bible study. Its orderly presentation of the world's masterpieces of art illustrative of sacred history is very impressive. Every subject dear to the Christian is depicted.

Pastor Russell preached today from the text, "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the Key of Knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."—Luke 11:52.

The word lawyer in New Testament usage, the Pastor began, has a very different meaning from our usage. It applied to those religious teachers of the Jews who made special professions of sanctity of heart and earnest desire to know God's will and to teach it. Today the corresponding class are designated Doctors of Divinity.

It was customary amongst the Jews, the speaker continued, that lessons from the Law and the Prophets should be read daily in the synagogues. The people were thus familiar with the letter of the Scriptures. The majority of them were illiterate; for educational facilities then were not what they are now. Consequently only a few claimed to have knowledge of the spiritual part of the Law and Prophets. These were chiefly of the literary and wealthy classes. To these the common people looked for guidance.

The people were hungry for the Message which Jesus brought. The nation would have gone over promptly to Jesus if the Doctors of the Law had given the word. Moreover, Jesus' teachings harmonized the Law and the Prophets, over which the Scribes and Pharisees and the Sadducees long had disputed. Had these Doctors of the Law been as hungry for Truth as were the people, undoubtedly their differences of interpretation of Scripture would have speedily disappeared in the light they shined upon the Bible through the Holy Spirit, Jesus and His Apostles being Jehovah's mouthpieces.

The Pastor then drew a parallel between the Jewish Age and its Harvest and the Gospel Age and its Harvest. Now, as then, God's people are perishing for lack of knowledge. Now, as then, the Doctors of Divinity will not use the Key of Knowledge themselves; and have buried it from the people under a mass of forms and ceremonies.

But Is Knowledge Necessary?

It was then shown that in our Lord's day the Jewish Doctors of Divinity contented themselves with telling the people what to do and what not to do, but did not help them to understand the deep meaning of the Law and the Prophets. So it is today, the speaker declared; a minister stands as a representative and mouthpiece of the Church creed, which in roundabout terms declares that whoever does not live a saintly life will suffer an eternity of torment. Is not this grievous burden to put upon any conscientious soul? he asked. Has it not caused untellable anguish to many of God's true people? Has it not driven from God and the Bible thousands of the most intelligent minds in the world?

As the Jewish Doctors of Divinity carried no such burdens, neither do Christendom's Doctors of Divinity. In private they acknowledge that they carry no such burdens. In public they give the inference that they do—not so much by positive terms as by implication, tone, inflection of the voice and by the fact that they represent creeds which so teach. These influential teachers are not to be excused because of the claim that in their official capacity they lose their personal responsibility and shift it upon those who made the creeds and those who adopted them. The people no longer trust the creeds. They realize that a greater light shines today when those creeds were formulated.

The people trust the Bible, the Pastor declared. They understand our modern Scribes and Pharisees to give assurance that the creeds of Christendom properly represent the teachings of Scripture. The creedal chains would become ropes of sand if the prominent Doctors of Divinity would publicly renounce the creeds, as nearly all of them do in private conversation.

Systematic Key-Hiding.

Next it was pointed out that our modern Scribes and Pharisees are proving themselves to be the antitypes of those addressed by Jesus. Taking away the Key of Knowledge, they urge the people not to bother their heads about doctrines, but to leave these subjects to the clergy. Bible study has degenerated into a study of geography, customs, etc., rather than an effort to understand the prophecies or the interpretation of them given by Jesus and His Apostles.

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Dated May 11th, 1914.
WILLIAM SIMS,
Administrator of the Estate of Edith
FRANK T. DISNEY,
Attorney for Estate.

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