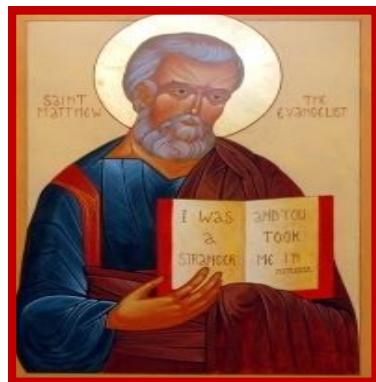


Verse 44- And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. The Syriac has, shall dissipate him. It means, whoso shall resist Christ and persecute Him, as you do, O ye Scribes, shall do it in vain, and shall bring hurt to himself both in mind and in body: still in such sort as that it may, by repentance, be repaired.

But upon whom it shall fall: this stone. Upon whomsoever Christ shall press with the whole weight of His heavy vengeance, as, for example upon the damned in the Day of Judgment (as you, O ye Scribes will be damned unless ye repent), to such a one there shall remain no hope of reparation, or restitution: as if a great stone should fall upon a shell, and dash it into minutest fragments, so that in no way could it be restored, or repaired. Christ therefore here threatens the Scribes with eternal and irreparable destruction, even the flames of hell. So S. Augustine (*lib. 1. quæst. Evang. ix. 30*), Abulensis, Barradi, Jansen, Maldonatus and others. Hear S. Augustine, "They fall upon Him, who only despise Him, or injure Him: but He shall fall upon them, when He shall come to judgment to destroy, that the wicked may be as dust which the wind driveth away."

Verses 45, 46- And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, they perceived that He spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet. The Scribes were aware, partly from the actual words of the Psalm, partly from the words and gestures of Christ, that these things were spoken against them, wherefore they roared, and gnashed their teeth at Him; and wished to take Him and torment Him, but through fear of the people, they did not dare to do so. Behold how by degrees Christ through His reproofs of the Scribes prepared for Himself the way to the cross and death. For to this after three days He was brought by the Scribes. Thus was fulfilled the counsel of God, that He would redeem mankind by the death of Christ.



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CHAPTER 21: 28-46

For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that *He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.*

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

Continuation of Matthew 21: 28-46

(*Verses 28-32.*) This parable scarcely needs an explanation, because Christ applies and explains it. In truth, the first—being at the beginning unwilling to obey his father, but afterwards repenting and obeying, by going to work in the vineyard—denotes the publicans and harlots; who at first by their sins repelled the will and law of God, but afterwards by John's preaching came to a better mind, and did penance, and lived chastely and justly, according to the law of God. The second son—who said to his father that he would go into the vineyard, but broke his word, and went not—denotes the Scribes and Pharisees; who always had the law of God in their mouths (as though they were most zealous and religious observers of it), but did not fulfill it in their deeds, but by lust, rapine, and usury acted contrary to it. Wherefore they provoked the heavy displeasure and anger of God against them, as well on account of their wickedness itself as because of their hypocrisy and feigned observance of the Law. For such hypocrisy and duplicity grievously provokes God.

so as to join and connect and connect the two walls of the Gentiles and the Jews on Itself, as in a corner, in the same fabric and house of the Church. So S. Augustine, S. Basil, Euthymius, Cassiodorus, Abulensis, Jansen, Maldonatus, and the rest of the Fathers and expositors, either here, or on Psalm cxviii. 22. Also S. Peter (*Epist. 1, cap. ii. 6*), where I have expounded the passage at length. For frequently in Scripture the fabric of the Church is compared to the building of a house, which is laid upon a solid foundation, such as a rock; for thus the Church is built upon, and rests upon, Christ. Christ, therefore, is the first rock of the Church, who communicated this name (together with the thing itself) to S. Peter—that after Christ he should be the rock of the Church—and then to the rest of the Apostles, whom in like manner He constituted the foundations of the Church, as is plain from the Apocalypse xxi. 19, Ephesians ii. 20, and elsewhere.

Moreover, Calvin arrogantly, as well as foolishly and impiously, declares himself to be this stone; forasmuch as, being rejected by the Pope and the Roman Church, he became the foundation of the Calvinistic sect. Thus does that proud braggart dare to equal himself to Christ, yea, to rob Christ of His oracle and title. But let him give the signs by which he may show that he has been sent by God: let him show, I say, miracles, prophecies, Scriptures, as Christ did. But he never has shown them, and he never will. Therefore he is not the reformer of the Church, but the deformer.

Verse 43- *Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* The Church is constantly called the *kingdom of God* in the gospel, because in it God reigns in the faithful by faith and grace, and leads them to the heavenly kingdom, that He may reign in them by glory.

Behold there is here, as it were, the *epimythion*, or post-parable and application, in which Christ clearly expounds and applies the three parables which He has spoken—namely, the first, concerning *the two sons*, one obedient, the other disobedient; the second, concerning *the vineyard*, whose husbandmen killed the servants and the Son of the owner; the third, concerning *the rejected stone*, which was made the head of the corner—to the Scribes themselves, and the Jews their followers, as follows: "You, O ye Scribes, are disobedient sons to God your Father, for ye persecute Me His Only Begotten Son sent by Him. Ye, too, are the husbandmen of this vineyard, who will kill Me its Heir. Lastly, ye are the builders of the synagogue, who reject Me as a stone; but God will make Me the basis and foundation of His Church, because He will take it away from you, and transfer it to the Gentiles, who will eagerly receive and worship Me, and so will be endowed by Me with grace and glory." For all the parables of Christ have this end in view—that they may signify the rejection of the Jews and the election of the Gentiles, because the Jews rejected Christ, Whom the Gentiles accepted. By this parable Christ so pricked the Scribes, that they prepared the cross for Him.

from thence, and from what preceded and followed (as Abulensis rightly observes, *quaest. 20*), the Scribes sufficiently understood that it was spoken of them; and then they added, *God forbid*, as Luke has (c. xx. 16).

He will miserably destroy the wicked: namely, the wicked ones of the vineyard, *i.e.*, the husbandmen of the Church, or the Scribes, with their followers, who killed the prophets and Christ. God will destroy them by Titus and Vespasian in this life, and by the devils in hell.

And will let out His vineyard to other husbandmen (viz., the Apostles and their successors), who shall render to Him the fruits in their seasons. This fruit of the vineyard, *i.e.*, of the Church of God, is made manifest in the conversion of the whole world to the faith and holiness of Christ, and especially in the constancy of so many thousands of virgins and martyrs. The rejection of the Jews and the conversion of the Gentiles are here foretold, as Christ teaches, verse 43.

Moraliter: learn from hence that, like as a vineyard produces good grapes even if those who till it be evil, so does the Church and her faithful members produce the good works of virtues, even though her pastors and teachers be sometimes evil, like the Scribes. Yet will they bring forth more and larger fruits if the pastors are good, as is plain from the Apostles, whose Apostolic virtues the primitive believers imitating, excelled in chastity, charity, patience, and all virtues. Zeuxis, a famous painter, is an illustration of this emblem. He painted a boy with a basket of grapes so skillfully and beautifully as to deceive the birds; for the birds flew to these grapes as though they were real, and pecked at them, to try to eat them. Then Zeuxis said, modestly, "I have painted the grapes better than I have the boy; for the birds fly to the grapes, and do not fear the boy, who stands there, as being only a picture." Thus the shepherds and keepers of the Church are frequently depraved, and badly depicted; but the grapes, *i.e.*, the works of the people, are better and more beautiful. By the carelessness of the keepers—*i.e.*, of the pastors—it comes to pass that they become the prey of the birds—that is, of the demons—by whom they are devoured.

Verse 33-41—There is no commentary for these verses.

Verse 42—Jesus saith unto them, *Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?* Christ cites Psalm cxviii. 22, where David speaks and prophesies of Christ. And the Scribes knew this. Wherefore they understood that they were marked and censured in this sentence by David as well as Christ. The meaning is: the Scribes, Priests, and Pharisees as the builders of the Synagogue—*i.e.*, of the Jewish Church—cast Christ from it as a worthless stone; indeed, as being hurtful to it, they condemned and killed Him. For the Scribes, whom He had previously called labourers and husbandmen, He now calls builders, says S. Jerome. But this stone rejected by the Jews is made by God the Head of the corner. That is, it was placed at the head of the corner, and was made the chief and altogether fundamental stone of the Church, and at the same time the corner stone,

Go before—Greek, προάγουσιν, in the present tense; future in *Vulg.* Meaning as follows: "The publicans and harlots precede you, O ye Scribes, *i.e.*, they go before you in the way of God and of virtue, and advance to Heaven by the pattern of faith, repentance, and change of life; and therefore they will indeed precede and go before you into the kingdom of Heaven, into which ye wicked ones will never enter, although ye might enter if ye would repent and change your lives. Thus (chap. v. 19) *the least in the kingdom of Heaven* are the impious and the reprobate, who shall be shut out of it.

In the way of justice; the Syriac is, *walking in the way of rectitude*—*i.e.*, leading a life perfectly just, right, holy and blameless.

Neither repented—*i.e.*, did not do penance. The Greek is οὐ μετεμελήθητε, did not repent and amend.

Mystically. Publicans and harlots denote the Gentiles, who at first were slaves to idols and vices, and afterwards were converted by the preaching of the Apostles, and served God and virtue. The Pharisees and Scribes denote the Jews, who seemed to worship God, but really despised Him, since they despised Christ who was sent by Him, and hardened their hearts in this perfidy. Whence S. Jerome, S. Chrysostom, Origen, S. Athanasius, Bede, Euthymius, Maldonatus, Jansen, and others, *passim*, interpret the parable of them.

Tropologically. Christ shows, says S. Chrysostom, that the populace and plebeians, who some time or other are converted, are better than priests who are never converted.

Tropologically. Ordinary Christians and lay people who, from a desire of holiness, keep evangelical counsels, although they are not bound to them by vow or profession, are like the first son. Priests, monks, and religious, who have taken vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and afterwards break them, are like the second son.

"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vine-yard, and slew him. When the Lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will

he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto Him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons" (Verses 33-41). Christ turns the point of this parable against the Scribes and Pharisees, His adversaries; but borrows it from Isaiah (v. 1), that He may add weight to it, so as to press and convince them. For Isaiah there made use of it, and predicted that Christ would use it. For Isaiah begins his fifth chapter thus. "I will sing to my beloved (Christ Incarnate) a song of my kinsman of his vineyard. A vineyard has been made for my beloved in the horn of a son of oil" (*Vulg.*) —*i.e.*, in a horn of olives, meaning in Judæa, which was strong and lofty like a horn, and fertile and rich like an olive. I have expounded this at length on Isaiah v.; from whence I will repeat summarily what has been there said, and will go through the whole parable in a few words.

1 *The man planting a vineyard* is God founding the Church, or synagogue, according to Psalm lxxx. 9. "Thou hast transplanted a vine out of Egypt, Thou hast cast out the nations (from Canaan), and there planted the vine," *i.e.*, the Synagogue, or Temple of the Jews.

2. *The hedge, the wine press and the tower* erected in the vineyard signify that God provided abundantly for His Church all things necessary. Literally however by the hedge you may understand, with S. Jerome, the wall of Jerusalem; or strong princes like David and the Maccabees, with the *Interlinear*; or the Law, with *Auctor Imperfecti*, and S. Irenæus (*lib. 4. cap. 70.*) *hedged it round about*, the Syriac has, *protected it on all sides by a wall.*

The wine press is the Altar where the blood of the victims was poured out. So Origen, S. Jerome, Bede, Theophylact, Euthymius. The wine press is said to be dug, because formerly small lakes were cut out, or dug, for the purpose. Or as Mark says (xii. 1) *a lake*: where they received the new wine pressed from the grapes by the press. This is plain from Isaiah v. 2. *Tropologically*, the *wine press* says S. Jerome, denotes the martyrs. Whence the Psalms viii. lxxxi. and lxxxiv. are entitled, *For the wine presses*. But S. Hilary thinks the prophets are meant, into whom the richness of the Holy Ghost very warmly flowed. S. Chrysostom by the *wine press* understands *the word of God*, which presses and torments man, through the opposition of the flesh.

The tower of the vineyard, *i.e.*, of the synagogue was the temple of Jerusalem, and God's worship there. So Origen, the Chaldee, S. Hilary, Bede, Theophylact, Euthymius. *Mystically*, the prophets, pastors and teachers, together with the kings and princes of the people were *the tower*. For they as from a tower were the watchmen of the people. So the same. Whence S. Hilary says, "A *tower* denotes the eminence of the law, which towered towards heaven, and from which the Advent of Christ might be watched for.

3. *The inhabitants of the vineyard* were the princes of the people: for it is their part to rule and guide the people. *To work in the vine-yard*, is to do justice, says S. Chrysostom.

4. God *went into a far country*, because, as Origen says, when He had given His law and covenants to the Jews, appearing to them on Mount Sinai, He did not afterwards appear to them, as though He had gone elsewhere.

5. *The time of fruits*, i.e., of the observance of the law and worship of God was in the time of David, Solomon, Josaphat, Hezekias, Josias, &c., when the Jews were able to live quietly to themselves and to God, as they ought. Or rather this *time* was always; because they were always bound to serve God, and bring forth the fruit of good works. Whence Maldonatus thinks this pertains to the figures and adornment of the parable.

6. *The servants sent by God to the vineyard*, i.e., the synagogue, to gather its fruits were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the rest of the prophets, whom the Jews killed, because they reproved their vices, stoning some of them, as Jeremiah. And He sent them a second time, and more than the first, that by His diligence and His love He might overcome the wickedness of the husbandmen. Whence S. Chrysostom says, "Through all the grades of wickedness the mercy of God went on increasing, and through all the steps of God's mercy, the wickedness kept increasing." Wherefore at length God sent unto them His Son, that is Christ, now Incarnate, whom as the Heir of the Synagogue, the Scribes both slew and crucified without the city, *i.e.*, outside of Jerusalem, on Mount Calvary, that they themselves might preside over and rule the synagogue, and enrich and magnify themselves by means of it. Instead of *they will reverence My Son*, the Syriac has, *they will be ashamed on account of My Son.*

Lastly, every one's *vineyard* that he must till is his soul. To a pastor it is his parish: to a bishop, his diocese: to a magistrate, the state; that they may bring forth the fruit of good works and virtues. The *hedge* is the laws and statutes: the *keepers* are the angels: *the tower* is meditation, reason, forethought: the *wine press* is tribulation, mortification, the cross. "A *servant is sent*," says Rabanus, "when the law, a psalm, or a prophecy is read: *he is cast out* when they are blasphemed or despised. *He kills the heir*, who tramples on the Son of God, and does despite to the Spirit of grace. *The vineyard is given to another* when the humble receive the grace which was despised by the proud."

Moreover, *The man planting the vineyard* is God, who is called a *man*, says S. Chrysostom, by similitude, not reality. By nature He is Lord, by kindness Father, according to the words in Isaiah "The vineyard of the Lord of Sabbath is the house of Israel."

They (the Scribes) say unto Him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men. You will say, Mark and Luke assert that Christ said this; how then does Matthew attribute the same words to the Scribes? I may reply with S. Chrysostom and Euthymius, that the Scribes said it first, and afterwards Christ repeated and confirmed the same, in such manner and gesture that