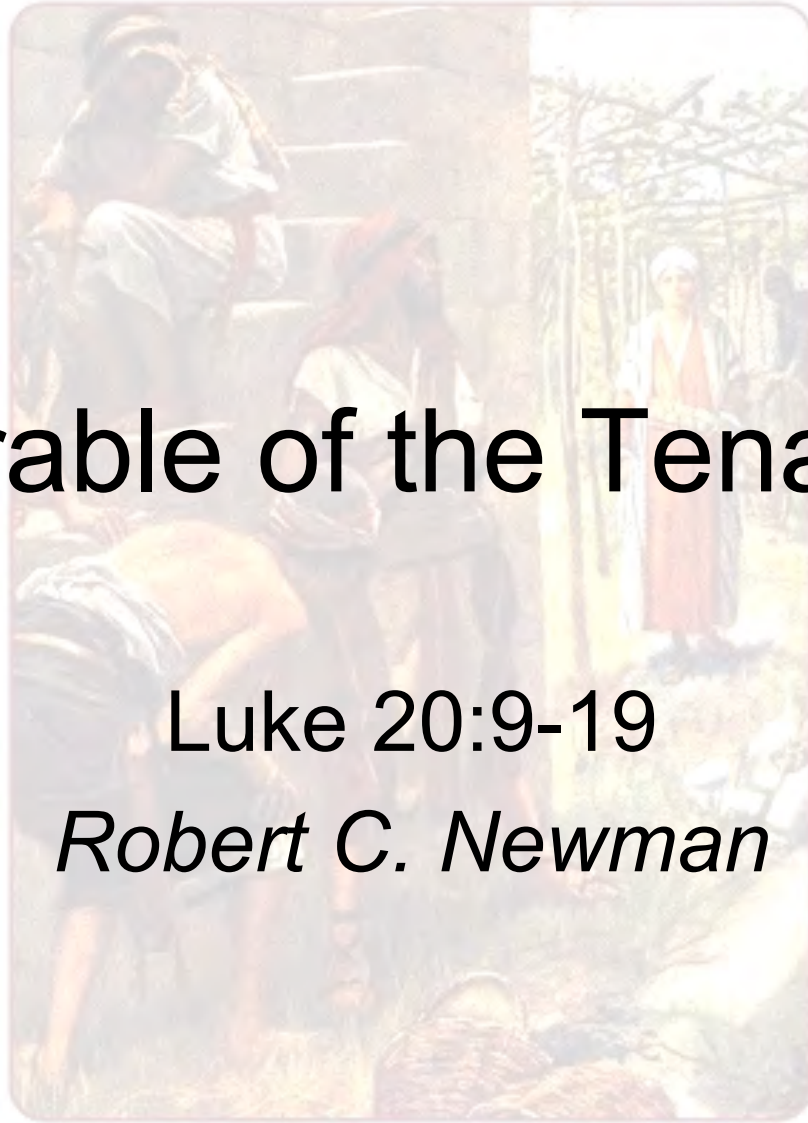




Parable of the Tenants

Luke 20:9-19

Robert C. Newman



Luke 20:9-15a

9 (NIV) He went on to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. 10 At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 11 He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. 12 He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out. 13 Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.’ 14 But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. ‘This is the heir,’ they said. ‘Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ 15 So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.”

Luke 20:15b-19

“What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” When the people heard this, they said, “May this never be!” 17 Jesus looked directly at them and asked, “Then what is the meaning of that which is written: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone’? 18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.” 19 The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.



The Story

The Landowner's Work

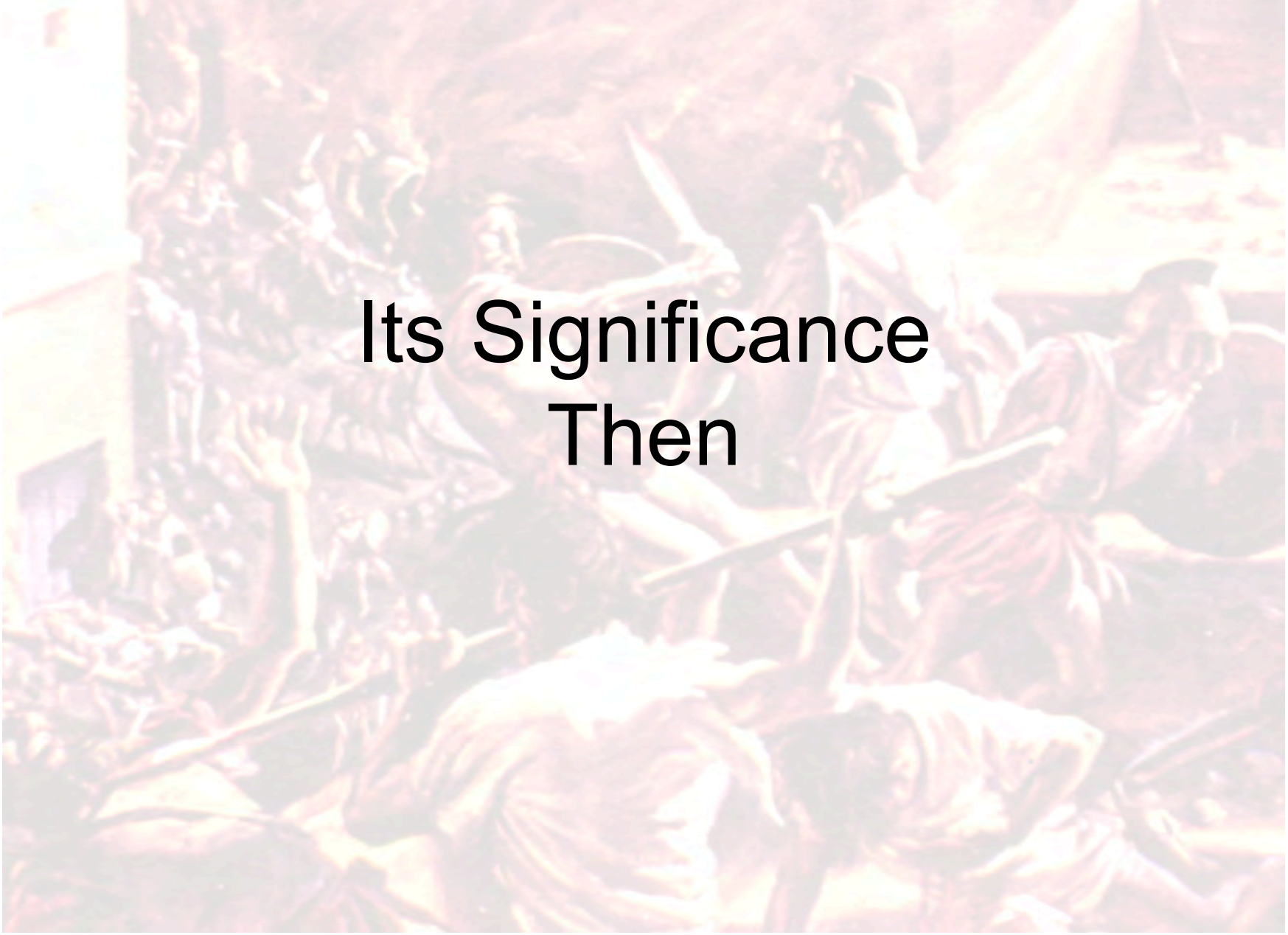
- A landowner develops some of his land to be a vineyard, e.g.:
 - Planting vines
 - Putting in a wall, winepress, watchtower
- He rents the vineyard to tenants, & goes away on a journey.
- At harvest time, he sends servants to collect the rent.

The Tenants' Response

- The tenants refuse to pay.
- Instead they mistreat or kill various servants.
- Finally the owner sends his son.
 - Perhaps tenants claim servants are bogus?
- The tenants plot & kill son to take property.
 - Perhaps they assume owner is dead?

The Owner's Response?

- What will the owner do now?
 - Note that the narration ends before the owner comes.
 - Jesus: He will kill the tenants & give the vineyard to others.
 - Audience: May this never be!
 - They seem to understand the parable.
 - Jesus cites OT “stone” prophecies.
 - Leaders realize the parable is against them.



Its Significance Then

Its Significance Then

- The leaders were right about its meaning.
- Based on the OT parable of Israel as God's vineyard (Isaiah 5):
 - God is the landowner
 - Israel the vineyard
- By extension, then:
 - Israel's leaders are the tenants
 - God's servants are the prophets
 - The son?

Its Significance Then

- So what about the ending?
 - God coming = judgment
 - Kill tenants = some disaster
 - Vineyard to others = Israel dispossessed?
- 40 years later (in AD 70):
 - Rome destroyed the Jewish state.
 - Many Jews were killed, sold into slavery
 - The leadership was annihilated.
 - The land went to Gentiles for ~1900 years.

A More Generic Significance

- Besides this specific application to Jesus' Jewish audience at that time...
- The parable works well as a picture of the relationship between God and mankind in general.
- Let's look at this in some detail.



God as Landlord

- Landlord makes good provision for vineyard.
 - God makes good provision for us.
- Landlord rents out vineyard.
 - God entrusts us with life, gifts, etc.
- Landlord goes away.
 - God is silent, invisible (cp Psalm 50)

Psalm 50:20-22

20 (NIV) You speak continually against your brother and slander your own mother's son.

21 These things you have done and I kept silent; you thought I was altogether like you. But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face.

22 Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with none to rescue...

God as Landlord

- Landlord sends servants.
 - God sends us OT prophets, apostles, Bible, preachers, etc.
- Landlord very patient, but doesn't cancel rent.
 - God very merciful, but he is also just.
- Landlord sends son.
 - Emphasis here is not on Jesus' atonement,
 - Rather on aggravation of rebellion.
- Landlord finally comes.
 - God will one day come in judgment.

Sinners (us!) as Tenants

- Ungrateful.
 - Rom 1:21 (NIV) For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.
- Misread patience as softness.
 - Rom 2:4 (NIV) Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? 5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

Sinners (us!) as Tenants

- Misread owner's absence as death.
 - 2 Pet 3:4 (NIV) They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."
- Think to take property for selves.
 - Cp Gen 3:5: You will be like God
- But disaster lies ahead.
 - Deut 32:35 (NIV) It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them.

Conclusions

- So, where do you stand?
- Are you, like the tenants in this story,
 - Refusing to pay the rent?
 - Mistreating God's servants?
- Actually, none of us can pay the rent!
- We must flee to God for mercy.
- He has paid the rent for us in Jesus.

The End...

...is not yet, but it may be soon!

Are you ready?

