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## **Rethinking what Jesus taught on Gentiles, Abrahamic Blessings and Parable of Vineyard (Matthew 21:33-46)**

Victor Christianto

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present article explores the parable of Matthew 21:33-46, reinterpreting Jesus's teachings on Abrahamic blessings in light of His work on Calvary. It argues that the parable conveys God's intention to extend these blessings to all people, including Gentiles, through faith in Jesus Christ. By examining the parable's context and message, the article reveals the inclusive nature of the Gospel, challenging traditional understandings of God's blessings and highlighting the universal scope of Jesus's redemptive work. The present article also discusses, among other things, a calling to do extreme ministries in our life.

### **ABSTRAK**

Artikel ini membahas perumpamaan Matius 21:33-46, menafsirkan ulang ajaran Yesus tentang berkat Abraham dalam terang karya-Nya di Kalvari. Artikel ini pada dasarnya berargumen bahwa perumpamaan tersebut menyampaikan maksud Bapa di surga untuk memperluas berkat-berkat ini kepada semua orang, termasuk orang non-Yahudi, melalui iman kepada Yesus Kristus. Dengan menelaah konteks dan pesan perumpamaan tersebut, artikel ini mengungkapkan sifat inklusif Injil, menantang pemahaman tradisional tentang berkat Tuhan, dan menyoroti cakupan universal karya penebusan Yesus. Artikel ini juga membahas, antara lain, panggilan untuk melakukan pelayanan yang ekstrem dalam hidup kita.

### **Kata kunci:**

New Testament studies, Jews-Gentiles relationship, meaning of Gospel, parable of vineyard

### **Keywords:**

Studi Perjanjian Baru, hubungan Israel-Gentile, makna Injil, perumpamaan tentang kebun anggur

## INTRODUCTION

Let me begin this small article with a personal story: more than ten years ago, at the time when my study in theology was not completed yet, once I received an email suggesting to write up an argument on who is the Messiah for the Jews in today's public stage. Initially, I was quite reluctant to comment on such a Jewish topic. But after prayers, I decided to accept that suggestion. Then I wrote an article, by starting from a renown rabbi, i.e. the late Rabbi Yitzhak Kaduri's testimony on his personal encounter with the *True Messiah*.<sup>1</sup>

This article aims to reexamine the message of Matthew 21:33-46, arguing that it conveys God's intention, through Jesus Christ's work, to bestow Abrahamic blessings upon all people, thereby redefining the traditional understanding of these blessings and highlighting the inclusive nature of the Gospel.

## Methodology

In the present article, methodology that we used is literature review especially publications in journals and books related to redemptive work of Jesus Christ, along with interpretive anthropology such as in publications by Richard Bauckham and T. Hwang, among other things. Through process of interpretation of Biblical texts along with those literatures and re-conscientization, we came to discuss the

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<sup>1</sup> See this article, [The True Name of the Messiah, viXra.org e-Print archive, viXra:1704.0137](https://www.vixra.org/e-Print_archive/viXra:1704.0137)

traditional meaning of parable of vineyard owner in Matthew 21:33-46 in a new light, which we hope can be found useful by readers.

## **Result**

### **The Context of Matthew 21:33-46**

It is known that the Gospel of Matthew is abound with themes of fulfilment and expansion of God's covenant with Abraham. Matthew 21:33-46, specifically, presents a parable about a vineyard owner who leases it to tenants. When the owner sends servants to collect the fruit, the tenants reject and kill them. Finally, the owner sends his son, hoping the tenants will respect him, but they too intend to seize the vineyard's inheritance. However, a deeper exploration of another vineyard parable in Matthew 21:33-46 offers profound insights into Jesus's teachings on Abrahamic blessings and their extension to all people, including the Gentiles (non-Jews). This parable is often interpreted as an allegory for God's relationship with Israel, culminating in the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus, God's Son. However, the implications extend beyond the historical context, speaking to the nature of God's blessings and their recipients.

The parable of the vineyard in Matthew 21:33-46 presents several interpretive challenges. Let's break down the key elements:

### **a. The Vineyard Owner and the Tenants**

The parable begins with a vineyard owner leasing his vineyard to tenants. This setup is often seen as a metaphor for God's relationship with Israel. The tenants' rejection of the owner's servants and son symbolizes Israel's history of rejecting God's messengers and ultimately Jesus.

### **b. The Servants and the Son**

The servants sent by the vineyard owner represent the prophets and messengers of God throughout Israel's history. The son, often interpreted as Jesus, represents the ultimate message of God's grace and redemption. The tenants' decision to seize the vineyard's inheritance highlights the depths of human rebellion against God's plan.

### **c. The Owner's Response**

The vineyard owner's response to the tenants' actions is one of wrath and judgment. This element of the parable is often seen as a reference to God's judgment on Israel for rejecting Jesus and the message of salvation.

### **d. The New Tenants**

The parable concludes with the vineyard owner deciding to give the vineyard to other tenants who will produce the fruits expected by the owner. This shift is often interpreted as a reference to the extension of God's blessings and salvation to new groups of people, beyond the original recipients.

### **e. Interpreting the Parable**

In light of Jesus's teachings and the broader context of the Gospel, this parable can be seen as conveying several key messages:

1. God's sovereignty: The parable highlights God's control over history and his plan of salvation.
2. Human rebellion: The tenants' actions symbolize humanity's tendency to reject God's messengers and plan.
3. Judgment and redemption: The parable conveys the consequences of rejecting God's plan and the offer of redemption through Jesus Christ.
4. Extension of blessings: The shift in tenants represents the extension of Abrahamic blessings to new groups of people, including the Goyyim, through faith in Jesus Christ.

By examining the parable's elements and context, we could discern a deeper understanding of Jesus's teachings on God's plan of salvation and the inclusive nature of the Gospel.

## **The Parable's Message on Abrahamic Blessings**

Traditionally, Abrahamic blessings are understood as spiritual and material promises made by God to Abraham and his descendants. These blessings include the promise of land, descendants, and a relationship with God that would extend to all nations through Abraham's lineage. The question arises: Who inherits these blessings in the context of Jesus's teachings?

In Matthew 21:33-46, Jesus critiques the religious leaders of His time, implying that the blessings associated with Abraham are not limited to one group of people but are meant for all who believe and act in faithfulness. The tenants' rejection of the vineyard owner's servants and son symbolizes Israel's history of rejecting God's messengers and ultimately Jesus. The owner's response to this rejection suggests a shift in the administration of the vineyard, implying that the blessings are to be offered to others who will produce the fruits expected by God.

This shift can be interpreted as an extension of Abrahamic blessings beyond traditional boundaries. The parable suggests that God's blessings are not confined to one people or nation but are available to all who respond in faith and obedience. This interpretation aligns with the broader message of the Gospel, which emphasizes faith in Jesus Christ as the means to receive God's blessings.

## **The Inclusion of the Gentiles into the blessings plan**

The narrative of Matthew's Gospel, particularly in chapters 21-28, underscores Jesus's mission to the lost sheep of Israel while also hinting at the broader scope of his ministry. The parable in Matthew 21:33-46, when considered in the context of Jesus's teachings and His Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), suggests that the Abrahamic blessings are to be extended to all nations. The *Goyyim*, or Gentiles (non-Jews), are included in the invitation to receive these blessings, not based on their adherence to Jewish law or tradition but through faith in Jesus Christ (Keller, 2023, 2014).

This inclusion reflects a deep rethinking of religious and ethnic boundaries. Jesus's teachings challenge the conventional understanding of who is entitled to God's blessings, emphasizing faith and response to God's initiative rather than ethnic or religious identity.

## **The Work of Jesus Christ on Calvary**

The work of Jesus Christ on the cross is central to the Christian understanding of salvation and blessings. Through His sacrifice, Jesus opens the way for all people to receive Abrahamic blessings, which are now understood in the context of the New Covenant. This covenant is not limited by the boundaries of ethnicity or nationality but is accessible to all who believe in Jesus Christ.

The parable of Matthew 21:33-46, in this light, can be seen as a commentary on the universal scope of Jesus's redemptive work. The blessings that were historically associated with Abraham and his descendants are now extended to include people from every nation, tribe, and language, who are called to become part of God's family through faith in Jesus.

The inclusion of Gentiles in Abrahamic blessings through faith in Jesus Christ is a foundational aspect of Christian theology, rooted in the early church's understanding of Jesus's teachings and the apostolic mission. The Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), for example, marks a pivotal moment in this development, where the early church affirmed that Gentiles could receive God's blessings through faith in Jesus Christ without needing to adhere to Jewish law.

Rethinking the true meaning of the Gospels for all people involves a nuanced understanding of Jesus's teachings, the cultural context of the early church, and the universal scope of God's plan of salvation. This reflection can deepen our appreciation for the inclusive nature of the Gospel and its implications for Christian practice and mission.

### **Implications for the Gospel Message**

The rethinking of Abrahamic blessings in light of Matthew 21:33-46 has profound implications for the Gospel message. It underscores the inclusive nature of God's

plan of salvation, emphasizing that the Good News of Jesus Christ is for everyone. The Gospel is not confined to a particular group or nation but is a universal call to all people to receive God's blessings through faith in Jesus Christ.



Figure 1. the damaged Holy Family Church in Gaza City (source : Christian Post)

This understanding challenges believers to embrace a broader perspective on mission and evangelism, recognizing that God's blessings are to be shared with all people. It also highlights the importance of living out the faith in a way that reflects the inclusive love of God, demonstrating through actions and words the universal

scope of Abrahamic blessings. Living out the faith should also be translated into a ministry, according to the gifts that the Holy Spirit gave abundantly to us.

### **Discussion: A calling to do real-world ministry**

The landscape of Christian ministry has changed dramatically in the postmodern world (Bauckham, 2003). Today, Christians are called to navigate complex social dynamics, cultural nuances, and spiritual landscapes that are often hostile to the Gospel. In this context, extreme ministry emerges as a vital approach for reaching those who are far from God. Extreme ministry involves venturing into uncharted territories, engaging with people who are often on the fringes of society, and finding creative ways to share the Gospel in contexts that are hostile or indifferent to the message of Jesus Christ.

Consider for example, the story of the late Ps. D. Wilkerson, who once ministered in the Bronx, encountering groups of drug gangs and engaging with people living on the streets (Wilkerson, YAKIN). Such contexts require a deep understanding of the local culture, a willingness to take risks, and a commitment to sharing the Gospel in ways that are relevant and meaningful to the people being reached. In a similar vein, this section explores the concept of extreme ministry, drawing inspiration from Bauckham's work on Christian witness in a postmodern world (Bauckham, 2003). We will examine the need for unconventional approaches to

ministry that push the boundaries of traditional norms and explore new ways of engaging with people who are far from God.

As we venture into these uncharted territories, we must be willing to think outside the box, take risks (but still following guidance given by the Holy Spirit), and trust in the power of the Gospel to transform lives. This requires a deep commitment to prayer, discernment, and community, as well as a willingness to learn from our mistakes and adapt to new contexts. By embracing extreme ministry, we can reach people who might otherwise be unreachable and prove the love and power of God in ways that are both authentic and compelling.

In this section, we will explore the principles and practices of doing extreme ministry, examining the ways in which Christians can engage in bold and innovative missionary work that extends the boundaries of what is considered "normal" in Christian witness. By exploring these unconventional approaches, we hope to inspire and equip readers to engage in extreme ministry, trusting in the power of the Gospel to transform lives and bring hope to a world in need.

### **Why we need to be bold in doing ministry: A Call to Action**

As we navigate the complexities of a postmodern world, the need for boldness in ministry has never been more pressing. The rapidly changing landscape of our global community demands a fresh approach to spreading the Gospel, one that is

characterized by courage, creativity, and a willingness to challenge conventional norms. In this section, we will explore why the time is ripe for bold ministry and why Christians must be willing to take risks in order to advance the Kingdom.

**a. The World is looking for Authenticity**

In an era marked by skepticism and uncertainty, people are searching for authenticity and meaning. The traditional structures and institutions that once provided a sense of stability and purpose are crumbling, leaving individuals feeling lost and disconnected. This void creates a door for Christians to step forward and offer a message of hope and redemption that is rooted in the timeless truths of Scripture. By being bold in our witness, we can provide a sense of direction and purpose that is desperately needed.

**b. The Church Must be Willing to Take Risks**

Bold ministry requires a willingness to take risks. This means stepping out of our comfort zones and engaging with people in new and innovative ways. It means being willing to challenge our own assumptions and traditions in order to reach a changing world. By embracing risk, we can create new doors for ministry, and we can exemplify the love of Christ in ways that are relevant and meaningful to our communities.

### **c. The Gospel is Still the Power of God**

At the heart of bold ministry is the conviction that the Gospel is still the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16). Despite the challenges and complexities of our modern world, the message of Jesus Christ remains the most powerful force for transformation and redemption. By being bold in our witness, we can unleash the power of the Gospel and see lives changed, communities transformed, and the Kingdom advanced.

#### **A Few Examples**

There are many examples of bold ministry that can inspire and challenge us. For instance, churches that are engaging in community-based initiatives, such as reaching out to homeless shelter, and disaster relief, are demonstrating the love of Christ in practical ways. Christian people, men and women, who are working in high-risk areas, such as conflict zones or areas of persecution, are showing remarkable courage and dedication to the Gospel. By highlighting these examples, we can encourage and equip others to be bold in their own ministry.

### **A. Proving the Existence of God for Logicians**

Engaging logicians and philosophers in debates about the existence of God can be a powerful way to reconcile the ratio and the faith. By utilizing logical arguments, such as the cosmological or ontological arguments, we can appeal to the rational side of potential believers. For instance, the cosmological argument posits that everything that begins to exist has a cause, and since the universe began to exist, it must have a cause – namely, God. We can use this argument to engage logicians in a discussion about the nature of reality and the existence of a higher power (see for instance, Christiano, JCER, 2025).

Moreover, we can draw on the works of philosophers like William Lane Craig, who has written extensively on the philosophical case for Christianity. By engaging with logicians and philosophers, missionaries can show that faith is not incompatible with reason, but rather, it is a rational response to the evidence.

### **B. Praying (team) for Spiritual Encounter: Toppling Idols in people's hearts**

Inspired by St. Paul's ministry in Ephesus, where he confronted the cult of Artemis, we can engage in spiritual encounter to idols around your place through prayer. Aim to break down spiritual strongholds and bring people to a knowledge of God. This approach requires a deep understanding of spiritual encounter and the power of prayer.

We can draw on biblical examples of spiritual encounter, such as the story of Daniel and the prince of Persia (Daniel 10:13), to understand the nature of spiritual territory. By praying for the removal of spiritual strongholds, it is good to keep in mind that this approach requires faith, perseverance, and a willingness to engage in spiritual encounter.

### **C. Preventing LGBTQI+ Activity Among Youngsters through Discussion Groups**

Creating safe spaces for open discussions about identity, sexuality, and faith can be a powerful tool in preventing the adoption of LGBTQI+ lifestyles among young people. By fostering an environment of empathy, understanding, and biblical guidance, we can help youngsters navigate complex issues. These discussion groups can provide a platform for young people to ask questions, share their struggles, and receive guidance from mentors who are equipped to provide biblical counsel (Davies & Gilbert, 2001; Suria, Simbolon, Susilo, *et al.*, 2021).

Young ministers can also draw on resources from organizations like the Evangelical Alliance, which provides guidance on how to engage with LGBTQI+ individuals in a loving and compassionate way. By showing young people that they are valued, loved, and accepted, we can help them develop a positive sense of identity and make informed decisions about their lives (see also Nicolosi, 1991).

#### **D. Other Unconventional Approaches**

Other ideas for extreme ministry might include:

- Using art and creativity to express the Gospel in new and innovative ways, such as through street art, graffiti, or multimedia installations.
- Engaging in social justice initiatives to exemplify God's love for the marginalized, such as working with refugees, advocating for human rights, or providing aid to those affected by disasters. Other possible approach is to rethink human relations in terms of conventional economics, and how the Gospel can transcend those relations, see for instance Christianto & Chandra (2020), Christianto (2022, 2025).
- Developing contextualized worship practices that resonate with local cultures, such as incorporating traditional music, dance, or art into worship services (cf. Frankl, 2021).
- Utilizing technology, such as virtual reality or social media, to spread the Gospel and reach out to people in new and innovative ways.
- Other forms of unconventional ministry, including practicing a more humanized approaches to learning and management, for example with coaching and servant leadership ways (Ismail, 1994; Jones, 2005; Leman & Pentak, 2004).

## **Concluding remark**

The parable of the vineyard in Matthew 21:33-46 offers a compelling narrative about God's plan to extend Abrahamic blessings to all people through the work of Jesus Christ. By rethinking Jesus's teachings in this parable, we come up with a deeper understanding of the inclusive nature of the Gospel and the universal scope of God's blessings. This understanding calls for a renewed commitment to sharing the Good News with all people, regardless of their background, and living out the faith in a manner that reflects God's love for all humanity.

In essence, the message of Matthew 21:33-46 is a powerful reminder that God's blessings know no boundaries, and through Jesus Christ, all people are invited to partake in the blessings promised to Abraham, becoming part of a new family defined by faith rather than ethnicity or nationality.

In the mean time, doing mission in a postmodern world nowadays requires creativity, boldness, and a willingness to challenge conventional norms. By exploring unconventional approaches, such as those outlined above, missionaries can effectively engage with people in new and innovative ways, bringing the Gospel to a world in need. As we venture into uncharted territories, we must trust in the power of the Gospel to transform lives and bring hope to a world in darkness.

## **Acknowledgement**

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## **Appendix<sup>2</sup>**

### **A Collective Call to the Global Church from Middle East Evangelical Leaders<sup>3</sup>**

#### ***Introduction***

We, Palestinian, Egyptian, Jordanian, Lebanese, Syrian, and Iraqi evangelical leaders representing various churches and Christian ministries, warmly invite our brothers and sisters in the global Church to engage with us, listen to our stories, and together acknowledge the power of unity and the gospel to transform our broken and divided region. We extend this invitation as a reflection of our steadfast commitment to the gospel and our ongoing efforts to make significant contributions to the lives of millions of people across the Middle East. We deeply appreciate the legacy of Western missionaries who arrived nearly two centuries ago to help us deepen our spiritual heritage and we honor the faithfulness of those serving today. Together, we aspire for our churches in the Middle East to reclaim our historic role as centers of outreach (Acts 1:8). Today, we renew our invitation to our global Church family to engage and unite with us to achieve this vision.

#### ***Our Commitment to Unity***

Although our goal to extend God's love to all people is united, a discernible missional gap exists between the Western Church and the Middle Eastern Church, reflecting our unaligned mission priorities. This divide contradicts our collective identity as one Body in Christ (Galatians 3:28). We know that unity is not merely an aspiration but a living divine mandate (John 17:20-23; Romans 12:4-5). Unity honors God and demonstrates the validity of the gospel as we strive to fulfill the Great Commission. We urge Christians around the globe to come to the Middle East not only to visit the ancient biblical sites and relics of the past, but to come and engage with the living stones of the Middle East—a faithful community of believers who have maintained their presence in this region for over two millennia.

#### ***Our Commitment to Peace***

We affirm our priority to love God and our neighbors, all of whom are equally created in the image of God (Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:29-31; Galatians 5:14). Our deep conviction is to love our Muslim and Jewish neighbors. We assert that the conflicts in the Middle East, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are not manifestations of spiritual warfare but are instead rooted in complex socio-political dynamics that demand nuanced understanding and strategic responses.

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<sup>2</sup> Allow me to include in this Appendix a call by Christianity churches in Middle East, meanwhile it is not intended to make a commentary what is the undergoing politics tensions there; see: [www.togetherme.org](http://www.togetherme.org)

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://togetherme.org/>

We unequivocally reject all forms of violence against civilians to achieve justice (Jeremiah 22:3; Romans 3:15-18), and strongly condemn all religious, political, and social ideologies that hinder a lasting peace. As citizens of our nations, we believe we are called to speak the truth and pray for those in authority so we can live in peace (1 Timothy 2:1-2; Proverbs 21:1). Our allegiance is to the gospel, untainted by political affiliations, and grounded in the love of Christ through peacemaking (Matthew 5:9; Psalms 34:14). We assert the indispensable role of the global Church in championing peace. We urge all believers to listen to the discourse of Christians in the Middle East who have resiliently held to their faith in Christ in austere environments. We ask our fellow Christ-followers to engage with the diverse and seemingly contrasting perspectives that emanate from our region.

### ***Our Commitment to the Great Commission***

Our mission is anchored in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). We affirm that God's redemptive love extends to every person (1 Timothy 2:3-4; John 3:16), transcending all cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. We recognize that endeavors influenced by geopolitical, economic, or other external agendas are often perceived as manipulative and frequently exploit the Bible for political purposes. Consequently, many people in our region reject our message of Christ's love because these influences resemble the methods and attitudes of historical colonial rule, which have had a largely negative impact on the Middle East for centuries. Such influences serve as a stumbling block and impede the Great Commission in our nations (Romans 14:13; 1 Corinthians 9:12). We passionately call upon the global Church to join with us in dialogue and collaboration to focus with one single vision on the transformative power of the gospel in our region.

### ***Our Commitment***

As followers of Christ in the Middle East, we mourn with all who endure suffering in Palestine and Israel, or any other nation (Matthew 5:4; Romans 12:15). We call upon all believers in the West to unite with us and the broader global Church, to proclaim the gospel of peace over declarations of war (Proverbs 12:20; Psalms 46:9). We acknowledge the diverse responses within the Western church, humbly recognizing both the shortcomings of many evangelicals in failing to support our Palestinian siblings and the Palestinian people during their hardships, and the faithfulness of others who have expressed God's love in real and tangible ways. Rejecting extreme religious ideologies, we commit to advocate for peace and compassion in accordance with Christ's teachings and biblical principles (Matthew 25:37-40; Romans 12:18-21; Proverbs 25:21; Micah 6:8). ...

### ***Our Invitation to You***

We extend a sincere invitation to our brothers and sisters across the globe to join us in a mission that transcends any ethnic, political, or theological divides. Please come and stand alongside us

and join what God is doing in our midst. Come and witness the power of the gospel alive in the Middle East. Participate in bridging divides, in initiatives that heal wounds, and in partnerships that extend the Kingdom of God. Our mission fields are ripe with opportunities for those who seek to serve alongside us and to learn from the enduring strength and faith of our churches. Let us together create a spiritual future where the Middle East is seen not through the lens of its conflicts but as a model of an enduring Christ-honoring Church.

Today is the day of opportunity to advance the Great Commission in one of the most historically significant places on earth. Together we can write the next chapter of God's story in our region—one that honors our one true faith and looks forward to a future filled with hope and peace. Together, we can demonstrate to our fractured world the power of our Christian unity. Together, we can shape the Middle East into a vibrant epicenter of outreach. This is our invitation. Please come be part of this living history.