

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants in Context: Jesus' Interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard in the Light of Second Temple Jewish Parallels

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Introduction

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mk. 12:1-9; Matt. 21:33-46; Lk. 20:9-19; also *GThom* 65-66) is perhaps one of the most important and most variedly interpreted parables in the Gospels. There are essentially two hermeneutical options in interpreting this parable. Either 1) the parable can be interpreted as it stands, in the context of the Synoptic Gospels and including the much controversial Isaiah reference, or 2) the parable can be removed from its context, its reference to Isaiah, and any other potentially problematic allegorical features.¹ Interpreters who chose the first option characteristically come to similar a similar conclusion: Jesus is interpreting his own mission in light of salvation history and is delivering a critique of the temple establishment.² Those who follow the second option and excise the Isaian reference as secondary and remove the parable from its Synoptic context propose a widely variegated number of interpretations.³ For example, removed from its context and its reference to Isaiah the Parable⁴ is variously

¹ For the purpose of simplicity we will refer to all interpretations of the Parable that follow this method as 'non-contextual interpretations.'

² E.g., Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 276-99; idem. *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants*, WUNT (Tubingen: J.C. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1983); Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2001), 381-406; Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 247-51; Brad H. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables: Rediscovering the Roots of Jesus' Teaching* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 247-51. Note also that those who do not accept this interpretation as original admit that it is the obvious interpretation of the parable in its present context within the Synoptics, e.g., William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew: 19-28*, Vol. 3, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 177 and John S. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 3, defines Mark's version of the story as an "allegorizing, nonrealistic, christological version, which summarizes *in nuce* his gospel's story of the coming of God's Son, the opposition and, indeed, murderous plotting he encountered, and his vindication by God".

³ As Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 108 noted, "once cut free of the Isaian intertext, the parable admits a dazzling variety of interpretive possibilities." Cf. Craig A. Evans' comment that "Having taken the parable out of its Markan/synoptic context, these interpreters have no idea what the parable originally meant" (*Mark 8:27-16:20*, WBC [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001], 224).

⁴ Throughout this paper we will refer to the Parable of the Wicked Tenants or the Parable (capitalized) by which we mean the parable as it is primarily reflected in Mk. 12:1-9 but also Matt. 21:33-46 (and to a lesser degree Lk. 20:9-19) and the Song of the Vineyard or the Song (capitalized) by which we mean Isa. 5:1-7 (MT).

interpreted as 1) a tragic parable of the immoral choices of the tenants,⁵ 2) a parable about the futility of violence on the part of the wronged tenants,⁶ 3) a parable about the potentially tragic fate of the kingdom, for "the owner's fate may be that of his son"⁷ and 4) as a parable of a foolish and usurious landowner.⁸

It is clear, therefore, that the most important aspect of the interpretation of this parable is the methodological decision as to whether or not it should be understood in its Synoptic context and with the Isaian reference or if it should be removed of both as secondary, post-Easter Christian influences. Though many reasons are given for removing the parable of its Isaian reference and removing it from its Synoptic context, by far the most prevalent are 1) the conviction that Jesus would not have told an allegorical parable,⁹ and 2) the similarity of this parable with a post-Easter confession.¹⁰ Yet I remain unconvinced that these two reasons are as strong as often assumed.

I am convinced, along with a number of others who find the arguments of the third quest for the historical Jesus to be most persuasive, of a number of factors that call into question the assumption that Jesus would not have told an allegory and the argument that the Parable of the Wicked Tenants reflects too closely post-Easter theology. The first factor that calls these assumptions into question is growing acceptance of the reliability of the Jesus tradition. Even if

⁵ J.D. Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973), 93

⁶ William R. Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 98-113.

⁷ Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), 237-253, here 253.

⁸ Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, see esp., 348-53. For more extensive surveys of some of the interpretive options see Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 106-48 and Klyne R. Snodgrass, "Recent Research on the Parable of the Wicked Tenants: An Assessment," *BBR* 8 (1998): 187-216, esp., 205-09.

⁹ See Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, vii, 50-56, 67-69, and throughout. This conviction goes back to Adolf Jülicher's paradigm shifting study *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 2 Vols. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1888-99). Though we owe Jülicher for moving us beyond 'allegorizing' as a legitimate hermeneutical method, he, unfortunately in my opinion, established an undue skepticism towards allegory that continues to this day. Cf. Klyne R. Snodgrass, "From Allegorizing to Allegorizing: A History of the Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus," in Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2000), 3-29, esp., 6-8.

¹⁰ E.g., Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:178; James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2003), 721-23, esp. n. 67.

some development of the Parable is accepted and even if the Isaian reference is viewed as secondary, the increasingly accepted view of the Jesus tradition as some form of controlled oral transmission suggests that "such developments most likely went along the lines indicated or allowed by the tradition, rather than introducing wholly new features. . . ." ¹¹ If this is the case, then the vast majority of interpretations offered which remove the Isaian reference and strip the Parable from its context are misguided for they offer interpretations which are radically different than the obvious interpretation within the context of the Synoptics. In order to accept one of the myriad of non-contextual interpretations one must accept that the evangelists reworked the original Parable so that it would mean something totally different than the version of the Parable which Jesus actually spoke. But this is not how oral transmission works within any sort of controlled setting.

The second, and perhaps most important, factor that calls the non-contextual interpretations into question, is the criterion of double similarity and double dissimilarity, ¹² which argues "that texts have a solid claim to authenticity if they are similar to but distinct from Judaism in some respects and if they are similar to the early church in some respects but also distinct at other points." ¹³ In other words, "Jesus must be understood as a comprehensible and yet, so to speak, crucifiable first-century Jew. . . ." ¹⁴ Related to and supporting the criterion of double similarity and double dissimilarity, at least for our purposes, is the criterion of the characteristic Jesus, which argues that "if a feature is characteristic within and relatively distinctive of the Jesus tradition (in comparison with other Jewish traditions)" then its presence is most obviously explained

¹¹ Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 205-10, 224, 238, 328-29, 332-35, here 333-34. Cf. Also N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 133-37; and Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006), esp., 252-318. Dunn, Wright, and Bauckham all draw upon the work of K. E. Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels," *Asia Journal of Theology* 5 (1991): 34-51 (reprinted in *Themelios* 20 [1995]: 4-11).

¹² See Wright, *Jesus*, 130-33; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 174-75; E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London, SCM, 1985), 18.

¹³ Darrell L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 202.

¹⁴ Wright, *Jesus*, 86.

by the fact that it goes back to Jesus.¹⁵ We are therefore looking for the plausible Jesus, the Jesus who plausibly fits within his Jewish context and who plausibly initiated the effect of the early Christian faith.¹⁶

If, therefore, we stand within the Third Quest for the Historical Jesus and assume that it is most likely that the Jesus tradition developed in line with (and obviously influenced by) the original words spoken by Jesus and that a historically plausible Jesus is one which is both similar enough to his Jewish heritage to be recognizable and yet radical enough to be crucifiable then we are unpersuaded by the various non-contextual interpretations of the Parable of the Wicked Tenants for a number of reasons. The purpose of this essay is to show that the Parable of the Wicked Tenants as it stands in its synoptic context is both a plausibly Jewish interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7) and yet a plausibly controversial but characteristic part of Jesus message so as to be offensive to his Jewish contemporaries. In the following pages we will examine several different Second Temple Jewish interpretations of the Song of the Vineyard to see how Jesus' interpretation fits within typical Second Temple Jewish interpretation. We will then briefly examine the Parable of the Wicked Tenants to show that it is characteristically Jewish enough to be believable in the first century and that it is controversial enough to have upset Jesus' contemporaries. This picture fits quite well within the third quest for the historical Jesus, and the criteria of double similarity and double dissimilarity and the 'characteristic' Jesus suggest that in fact, the Parable as it exists in the synoptics is very plausible on the lips of Jesus.

¹⁵ See James D.G. Dunn, *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 57-78, here 70; idem., *Jesus Remembered*, 333-35; L.E. Keck, *A Future for the Historical Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1971), 33, "Instead of the distinctive Jesus we ought rather to seek the characteristic Jesus."

¹⁶ Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 172-212, esp., 210-212.

Second Temple Jewish Interpretation

The LXX

The logical place to begin a study of Second Temple Jewish interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard is the Septuagint (LXX). It is an early witness of Jewish interpretation, dating to most probably to the second century BCE.¹⁷ It is also to this version which the Markan version of the Parable most clearly alludes,¹⁸ though, as we will see, there is clear influence from other versions of the Song of the Vineyard.

The basic understanding of the LXX version of Isaiah is that it seeks to "negotiate a way between respecting the semantic integrity of the Hebrew and employing a *koine* Greek idiom intelligible to a Hellenistic Jewish audience."¹⁹ Making the text intelligible to a Hellenistic Jewish audience included writing good *koine* Greek,²⁰ harmonizing difficult or offensive texts,²¹ and ac-

¹⁷ Arie van der Kooij, "Isaiah in the Septuagint," in Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans, ed., *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition* (New York: Brill, 1997), 513.

¹⁸ Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 149-72, argues that the Septuagintal character of the allusions in Mk. 12:1 are evidence that these allusions are secondary, most likely from a Greek speaking Christian redactor. However, this interpretation is far from necessary. The discovery of many Hebrew manuscripts at Qumran which conform to the LXX show that a Hebrew *Vorlage* lies behind many of the variant readings making it unclear whether an LXX allusion is of Greek or Hebrew provenance (Craig A. Evans, "The Scriptures of Jesus and His Earliest Followers," in Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, eds., *The Canon Debate* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002], 192). Furthermore, as Stanley Porter has argued, given the widespread use of Greek as the *lingua franca* in first century Palestine it cannot be assumed that the use of the LXX by Jesus is evidence of a later redactor. His point is worth quoting in its entirety:

In light of the widespread use of Greek in Palestine even by Jews, as well as the use of Greek by Jews from outside of Palestine, and the evidence for the use of the Greek version of the Jewish Scriptures even in Palestine . . . it is not so easy to dismiss the use of the Septuagint by Jesus as simply the result of the Gospel writers or later redaction. Many Jews, even of Palestine, may well have known their Scriptures only or predominantly in Greek (Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSOT Supp. 191 [Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 156).

Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 BC - AD 337* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 352, makes a similar argument regarding the prevalence of Greek speaking Jews in Palestine in the first century CE. Though, as we have said, even if the *textual* allusion is secondary, it is most likely a development in the tradition in order to bring out an emphasis that was already there. So Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 721-22.

¹⁹ Brevard S. Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2004), 4, discussing Emanuel Tov's view of the Septuagintal text of Isaiah and its relationship with the manuscripts found at Qumran in "The Text of Isaiah At Qumran," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition*, ed., Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans (New York: Brill, 1997): 491-511.

²⁰ van der Kooij, "Isaiah," 518.

²¹ Ibid. See also David A. Baer, "'It's All About Us!' Nationalistic Exegesis in the Greek Isaiah (Chapters 1-12)," in *As Those Who Are Taught' the Interpretation of Isaiah From the LXX to the SBL*, ed., Claire Mathews McGinnis and Patricia K. Tull (Boston, MA: Brill, 2006): 32.

tualizing or modernizing texts for a second century Hellenistic audience.²² The latter two practices, harmonization and actualization, are interpretive decisions. By examining places where the LXX translator has harmonized (or smoothed) texts or actualized readings in Isa. 5:1-7 will help us to understand how that text is being interpreted.²³

The most evident harmonization, or smoothing of the MT text by the LXX translator is the change from third person to first person narrative. In the MT the Song of the Vineyard shifts, somewhat awkwardly, between the singer singing about his friend's vineyard (third person) and his own vineyard (first person). This shift has been duly noted and variously interpreted.²⁴ For our purposes the importance of this change by the LXX translators is the awkward retention of the third person in Isa. 5:1b: ἀμπελῶν ἐγενήθη τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ, 'a vineyard there was to the beloved.' The retention of this third person reference is very awkward, especially since in the same verse, the singer has already affirmed the fact that it is his vineyard. The most cogent reasoning for this phenomenon is suggested by Williamson who has proposed understanding the phrase ... כֶּרֶם הַיָּה לְ (a vineyard there was to...'), of which the LXX's ἀμπελῶν ἐγενήθη τῷ. . . is a very literal translation, as "a stereotyped idiom, comparable with English 'once upon a time.'"²⁵ If Williamson is right, the existence of this idiom explains why the LXX translator would be forced to keep the awkward third person reference in 5:1b. It would also suggest that the mere use of the phrase, 'a vineyard there was to...' could signal to the reader that a certain

²² van der Kooij, *Isaiah*, 515-18; Baer, "Nationalistic Exegesis," 30; Childs, *Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 4.

²³ Because not all variants between the LXX and MT are relevant for understanding the interpretive mindset of the LXX translator we will not mention all of them, only the most significant for our understanding. For a line by line examination of the variants between the LXX and MT see Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 157-66.

²⁴ The most prominent reason given for the shifts in person is that the shift to first person heightens the level of involvement of the audience. For this interpretation see H.G.M. Williamson, *A Critical Commentary on Isaiah 1-27*, Vol. 1, ICC (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 339 and John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1986), 154. I, however, am most convinced by the argument of Gary Royce Williams, "Frustrated Expectations in Isaiah V 1-7: A Literary Interpretation," *VT* 4 (1985): 459-465, who argues for the presence of a rhetorical strategy of frustrating expectations which forces the audience to reinterpret the Song at each frustration. This understanding of the rhetorical strategy of the Song explains the phenomenon of the shifts in person as well as other difficult issues in this text.

²⁵ Williamson, *Isaiah*, 336. Williamson cites Naboth's vineyard (1 Kgs. 21:1) and Solomon's vineyard (Song 8:11) as other examples of this idiom, where each "introduces a tale of sorts rather than a piece of historical reporting."

type of tale would follow. This kind of idiomatic expression in the context of a vineyard story is important because even the Gospel of Luke and the *Gospel of Thomas*, which seem to have removed the Isaian allusion from their version of the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, have the phrase, 'a man planted a vineyard.'²⁶

Another very clear variant is found in 5:2, concerning the preparation for the planting of the vineyard. The MT speaks of 'digging' (עזק) and 'clearing of stones' (לסקל).²⁷ The LXX has clearly not attempted to represent these two verbs. Instead, they have in their places 'he put a hedge around it' (φραγμὸν περιέθηκα) and 'he fenced it' (ἐχαράκωσα). Both of the Hebrew words are rare, עזק being *hapax* and לסקל being used as a privative only here and in Isa. 62:10.²⁸ It is possible that these changes in verbs from the MT to the LXX is simply due to the LXX translators trying to come to grips with the unusual Hebrew words. However, Kloppenborg, has thoroughly and persuasively argued that what we have here in Isa. 5:2 LXX is an updating of the viticultural language that "reflects agricultural practices in Hellenistic Egypt."²⁹ If this is the case, and it seems likely that it is, then this is an example of the updating of the text that we have mentioned before.³⁰

Another often mentioned variance between the MT and LXX is the question of what is wrong with the vineyard. The MT says that when the owner expected the vineyard to yield grapes, it instead yielded בַּשִּׁי. Only in vv. 2 and 4 of this chapter is the noun שִׁי used. It is

²⁶ Luke 20:9 begins: ἄνθρωπος [τις] ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα, 'a [certain] man planted a vineyard'; *GThom* 65 begins: πελαγ χε ογρωμε ν̄ρη[στο]ς νεγ̄[τα]γ̄ ν̄ογμα νελοολε, 'He said: a man of justice had a place of grapes' (Text and translation from Michael W. Grondin, *An Interlinear Coptic-English Translation of the Gospel of Thomas* [http://www.geocities.com/Athens/9068/z_transl.htm]).

²⁷ Literally the verb reads 'he stoned it.' However, it is clearly meant to be understood as a piel privative so that it would mean 'he cleared it of stones' (See Hans Wilderberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp, Continental Commentaries [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991], 176). Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 149, n. 2, helpfully compares it to the "modern English expression 'she dusted the table.'"

²⁸ The LXX translated it correctly there as τοὺς λίθους τοὺς ἐκ τῆς ὁδοῦ διαρρίψατε ('cast the stones from the way'). Though, as Williamson, *Isaiah* 319, notes, the presence of לַסְקֹל there makes the meaning of 'clear it of stones' beyond doubt.

²⁹ Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 149-66, here, 166. See also, Williamson, *Isaiah*, 318-19.

³⁰ See above, p. 4, esp. the references in n. 20.

most likely related to the root **בַּאֲשׁוּ** ('have a bad smell, stink'), and should thus be translated as something like 'diseased' or 'rotting' grapes.³¹ Thus, the MT envisions the problem being with the grapes. The LXX, on the other hand, clearly does not try and translate **בַּאֲשׁוּ**, but instead supplies its own understanding of the problem of the vineyard by inserting the idea of 'thorns' (**ἀκάνθας**). Kloppenborg has suggested that this shift from bad grapes to thorns means that the LXX translators envisioned the problem being with irresponsible (and unmentioned) tenants.³² Thus, the problem is not with the vineyard per se, but with those charged with keeping it, because the owner would hardly complain about the presence of thorns if he were the one personally caring for the vineyard. If the LXX translators did have tenants in mind, it would clearly have relevance for understanding Jesus' interpretation of this text in the Parable. It is most likely, however, that Kloppenborg's interpretation is reading too much into the shift from 'bad grapes' to 'thorns.' Much more probable is the idea that the LXX translator, faced with a difficult word, which was clearly meant to convey a negative assessment of the vineyard, opted for a more commonly used word that even becomes a motif within the vineyard imagery throughout First Isaiah.³³ In this way, the LXX translator is merely using aspects of the Song that come later in the passage (v. 7) to help in the translation of earlier passages.³⁴

A final variance between the MT and LXX worth noting is the change of the pronouncement on the vineyard from **וְאֲשִׁיתָהּ בַתָּה** ('I will make it a waste') to **ἀνήσω τὸν ἀμπελῶνά μου** ('I will abandon my vineyard'). The Hebrew is difficult owing to the fact that **בַתָּה** is *hapax*, but the context makes the sense very clear, and none of the translations seem to have trouble with

³¹ See Williamson, *Isaiah*, 319-20 and also S.R. Driver, "Difficult Words in the Hebrew Prophets," in H.H. Rowley, ed., *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1950), 53, n. 6, who points to Aquila's translation of **σάπριον** ('rotten, putrid') as support for this understanding.

³² Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 164.

³³ See Isa. 5:6; 7:23-25; 32:14; 33:12.

³⁴ See Williamson, *Isaiah*, 319.

this phrase.³⁵ That being said, the LXX's rendering is clearly an interpretation which nuances the basic sense of the MT differently. Where the MT speaks of destruction upon the vineyard, the LXX speaks of its abandonment.³⁶ Thus, the LXX introduces the concept of the divine abandonment, or the removal of the divine presence in the judgment of Israel.³⁷ This theme will become a classic way of speaking of the exile in rabbinic Judaism, but it is already present in the LXX.³⁸

To summarize our brief examination of the LXX version of Isa. 5:1-7 we can make the following observations: 1) LXX Isa. 5:1-7 shows signs of smoothing or harmonization that is typical of LXX Isaiah. 2) It has updated the viticultural language to reflect the agricultural practices of the translator's Hellenized culture. 3) It has envisaged the divine judgment upon the vineyard as destruction (as the MT did) but also as the removal of the divine presence. 4) It may also suggest that the phrase 'a man had a vineyard' is an idiomatic introduction to a certain type of tale.

DSS: 4QpIsa^b (4Q162) and 4Q500

Proceeding roughly chronologically, we turn to an examination of the interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard at Qumran. Two texts stand out the clearest as prime examples of exegesis of this text. These are the fragment of a *peshet* on Isaiah, 4QpIsa^b (4Q162) and the small fragment 4Q500. Both of these texts predate the Parable by nearly a century.³⁹ We will deal with each fragment in turn and see what light they shed on our Isaian passage.

³⁵ For a detailed discussion of the difficulty of understanding this word see Williamson, *Isaiah*, 322-23.

³⁶ Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 165, notes that the LXX's use of ἀνήμη "is a technical term used in Ptolemaic papyri in connection with land left untilled."

³⁷ This will become more important as we look at the Targum of Isaiah and the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, but the concept of divine abandonment is already present in the MT: Isa. 54:7-8.

³⁸ See Isa. 2:6 and 3:8 as examples of places where the LXX pictures divine abandonment (using the word ἀνήμη), where the MT does not.

³⁹ John Strugnell, "Notes en marge du volume V des Discoveries in the Judean Desert," *RevQ* 7 (1970): 186, dates 4QpIsa^b to the pre-Herodian period and M. Baillet, *Qumran Grotte 4:III (4Q482-4Q520)*, DJD 4 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982), 78, dates 4Q500 to the first half of the first century B.C.E.

4QpIsa^b. The first text is the fragmentary *peshet* on Isaiah contained in 4Q162. This text "consists mainly of the following biblical verses: Isa 5:5b (?), 6a (?), 11-14, 24c-25, and 29b-30 (?)."⁴⁰ It begins with the text of Isa. 5:5b, and follows with its interpretation. The key text is:

4QpIsa^b, Col. i

(1) פרץ גדרו ויהי למרמס
 (2) .[פשר הדבר אשר עזבם
 (3) ד ואשר אמר ועלה שמיר

- 1) *I bro]ke down its fence and it was for trampling*
- 2) ...] The interpretation of the phrase is that he has forsaken them
- 3) ...] and as it says, *But there shall come up briars*⁴¹

That this fragment is interpreting Isa. 5:5b is clear⁴² even though the existing reference to 5:5b is limited to פרץ גדרו ויהי למרמס ('I bro]ke down its fence and it was for trampling').⁴³ Two interpretive issues in this fragment are relevant. The first is the biblical citation of Isa. 5:5b in line 1. The MT reads ויהי למרמס ('and it will be for trampling'). The *weqatal* form ויהי must be understood in this context as having some sort of future sense.⁴⁴ 4QpIsa^b, however, has ויהי למרמס, which, generally understood to be a *wayyiqtol* form,⁴⁵ ויהי, must be interpreted as a past

⁴⁰ Maurya P. Horgan, *Pesharim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books*, Vol 8. CBQ Monograph Series (Washington, DS: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1979), 86.

⁴¹ Text and translation from J.M. Allegro, "More Isaiah Commentaries from Qumran's Fourth Cave," *JBL* 77/3 (1958), 215. Biblical texts are translated in italics, the *peshet* interpretations are not.

⁴² E.g., Allegro, "Isaiah Commentaries," 215; Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 89; George J. Brook, "The Biblical Texts in the Qumran Commentaries: Scribal Errors or Exegetical Variants?" in *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee*, Craig A Evans and William F. Stinespring, eds. (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987): 90.

⁴³ Cf. MT, פרץ גדרו ויהי למרמס ('I will break down its wall and shall be trampled down').

⁴⁴ Cf. Williamson, *Isaiah*, 321; Wildberger, *Isaiah*, 177 and virtually all translations.

⁴⁵ So Brooke, "Biblical Texts," 90; Allegro, "Isaiah Commentaries," 215. Cf. Williamson, *Isaiah*, 322. It must be noted that the form ויהי could be read as a jussive, so that the phrase read 'I will break down its wall *that it may be* for trampling.' However, a jussive with a purpose sense would be odd following an infinitive absolute (פרץ) since this usage of the jussive most often follows other volitional forms, especially the imperative. See Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, vol. 2 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2005) §116, 168b, 169b; E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, translated by A.E. Cowley (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2006), §109f. The only occurrence of the construction InfAbs followed by a purpose jussive is 2 Kgs. 5:10, but there, the InfAbs הלך must be understood as imperative in meaning. Much more likely is the reading of Brook, Allegro and Williamson of a past tense *wayyiqtol* which is in keeping with the interpretive tendencies of the Qumran community.

action.⁴⁶ It is possible that the *waw*-consecutive construction of the MT was not understood by the later writer of 4QpIsa^b,⁴⁷ however, it is probably more likely that this change in verb form is evidence of the Qumran community interpreting their position as being in the end times, between a past judgment (4QpIsa^b, col 1, line 1) and looking forward to a future judgment (4QpIsa^b, col 1, line 3).⁴⁸ In this way the Qumran community has eschatologized their own position in its interpretation of the biblical text. However, it must be said that the text is too fragmentary to make any firm conclusions on this interpretation.

A second interpretive issue is the actual *peshet* interpretation in line 2. There, the interpretation of Isa. 5:5b is given as עזבם ('he has forsaken them'). The importance of this interpretation is two-fold. First, the author of this fragment has interpreted the destruction of the vineyard as divine abandonment is the same as we saw in the LXX with the use of ἀνήμι. Thus, the author of 4QpIsa^b has interpreted the Song in terms of the removal of the divine presence. Second, the plural suffix on עזבם is important because it cannot be referencing the vineyard, which is singular. The most likely antecedent of the plural suffix is the 'men of Juda' from 5:3. In the biblical portion of line 1, the suffix is singular, גדרו ('its fence'), thus the subject is clearly the singular vineyard. But in the interpretation, the author of 4QpIsa^b has allegorized the text so that the vineyard is representative of the 'men of Judah' which is probably to be understood as the leadership of Israel.⁴⁹ Thus, the author of 4QpIsa^b has understood the Song of the Vineyard as allegorical and critical of the ruling party.

⁴⁶ Cf. Brooke, "Biblical Texts," 90; Williamson, *Isaiah*, 322.

⁴⁷ See Williamson, *Isaiah*, 322.

⁴⁸ Brooke, "Biblical Texts," 90.

⁴⁹ See the detailed study by Marvin L. Chaney, "Whose Sour Grapes? The Addressees of Isaiah 5:1-7 in the Light of the Political Economy," *Semeia* 87 (1999): 105-22, who concludes that this interpretation is present in the original MT version of Isa. 5:1-7. For the argument that 4QpIsa^b views the 'men of Israel' as the leadership of Israel and that they can be specifically identified as the Hasmoneans, see Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their True Meaning for Judaism and Christianity*, Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, Inc., 1994), 229.

4Q500. The second Qumranic fragment that is important for our study of Second Temple Jewish interpretation of Isa. 5:1-7 is the small but important fragment 4Q500.⁵⁰ The text of the fragment is as follows:

4Q500

- (2) בכ|איכה ינצו ו
 (3) [יקב תירושכה [ב]נוי באבני]
 (4) [לשער מרום הקודש]
 (5) [מטעכה ופלגי כבודכה ב]
 (6) [כפות שעשועיכה]
 (7) וקר|מכה

- 2)] may your [mulberry trees blossom and . . .]
 3)] your winepress [bu]ilt with stones [
 4)] to the gate of the holy height [
 5)] your planting and the streams of glory . . .]
 6)] . . . the branches of your delights . . .]
 7)] your [vine]yard. [⁵¹

The association of this text with Isa. 5:1-7 has been convincingly argued by Baumgarten and Brooke. The main textual reasons for the association are 1) the existence of the winepress (יקב) in line 3 of this text and Isa. 5:2; 2) the association of the 'delightful branches' (כפות) in line 6 and the 'his pleasant planting' (נטע שעשועיו) in Isa. 5:7; and 3) the very probable reconstruction of line 7 as וקר|מכה 'your [vine]yard.'⁵² With the association between this text and Isa. 5:1-7 clearly in mind we can see the interpretive decisions by the author of 4Q500.

⁵⁰ This fragment was originally published by Baillet, *Qumran*, 78-79, pl., xxvii. He titled it 'Bénédiction' and associated it with the 4Q502 family, but this association has since been questioned.

⁵¹ The text is the reconstruction proposed by Joseph M. Baumgarten, "4Q500 and the Ancient Conception of the Lord's Vineyard," *JJS* 40 (1989): 1-6, with the misprint of בכ|איכה corrected to בכ|איכה. The translation is from George J. Brooke, "4Q500 1 and the Use of Scripture in the Parable of the Vineyard," in idem., *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005, 235-60; originally published as "4Q500 1 and the Use of Scripture in the Parable of the Vineyard," *DSD* 2 (1995): 268-94; throughout our engagement with this article we will use the pagination from *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*.

⁵² Baumgarten, "4Q500," 1-2. In fact, Brooke, "4Q500," 236, proposes that we can be even confident enough to reconstruct the text of line 7 as וקר|מכה because "the ink traces at the start of the line are entirely compatible with *reš*."

The most important interpretive element of 4Q500 is association of the 'gate of the holy height' (לשער מרום הקודש) with the watchtower (מגדל) from Isa. 5:2 which is in turn associated with the Temple. This observation is made by the recognition that the 'streams of your glory' (ופלגי כבודכה) flow from the 'holy height.' The association of these streams with the Temple can be found in Ps. 46:5 where 'There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High' (נהר פלגיו ישמחו עיר-אלהים קרש משכני עליון). This idea is further seen in Ezek. 47:1-12, where 'there, water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple' (והנהמים יצאים מתחת מפתן הבית). This association of the tower in Isaiah 5 with the Temple is strengthened by the interpretations in Targum Jonathan and Tosefta Sukkah 3:15.⁵³ Beyond this, the "association of the tower in the vineyard with the sanctuary in Jerusalem may also be seen in *1 Enoch* 89:50, the description of the building of the Solomonic temple"⁵⁴ so that we begin to see a growing tradition of association between the tower in the vineyard with the Temple in Jerusalem.

The association with the temple can also be seen in the awkward reference to the wine vat being 'built with stones' (ב[ב]נוי באבני). It has been noted that this phrase is unnecessary "unless what is in view is the 'altar of stones' (מזבח אבנים) of Deut 27,5 and the altar of the temple."⁵⁵

What we can conclude from this fragmentary text of 4Q500 is that the interpreters at Qumran clearly associated the Song of the Vineyard allegorically with the temple so that the watchtower is the temple and the wine vat is the altar.⁵⁶ This is important for two reasons: first, it

⁵³ We will deal with Targum Jonathan below, Tosefta Sukkah 3:15 reads: ויבן מגדל בתוכו זה חיכל, יקב חצב. ('And he built a tower in its midst, this refers to the Hekhal; He dug a winepress in it, this refers to the altar; And he dug a winepress in it, this refers to the channel'). Text and translation from Baumgarten, "4Q500," 2.

⁵⁴ Brooke, "4Q500," 239. Cf. also Evans, *Jesus*, 399-400.

⁵⁵ Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 90. Cf. also Tosefta Sukkah, 3:15 and Targum Isaiah 5:2.

⁵⁶ It should be noted that even Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 91 admits this thesis, however he argues that "The coincidence, however, should not be taken to imply that the parable was originally an anti-temple polemic; that

continues the trend we have been seeing of allegorical Jewish interpretations of the Song of the Vineyard, and second, it makes a clear association between the indictment of the vineyard in Isaiah 5 with an indictment against the Temple establishment in the Parable.

We can now make a few conclusions about the interpretative tendencies of the Qumran texts regarding the Song of the Vineyard. First, in both 4QpIsa^b and 4Q500 we saw the allegorization of the Song of the vineyard. Second, in both 4QpIsa^b and 4Q500 we saw that the allegorization of the indictment of the vineyard was directed at the Jewish leadership: the temple in 4Q500 and the 'men of Judah' in 4QpIsa^b. Third, we saw in 4QpIsa^b the association of the judgment upon the vineyard with the withdrawal of the divine presence. Finally, as we saw with the change of the biblical citation in line 1 of 4QpIsa^b, there was an 'eschatologization' of the position of the community in its interpretation of the Song.

Targum Isaiah

The next text that we will examine in our study of the Second Temple interpretation of Isa. 5:1-7 is the Targum of Isaiah. We must be careful here because the extant Targum of Isaiah is found in Codex Reuchlinianus, the manuscript of which is dated to CE 1105 and probably cannot be dated in its current form to any time earlier than the fourth century CE.⁵⁷ However, it is universally recognized that the the Targum of Isaiah, at the very least, contains material that goes back to pre-Christian times.⁵⁸ Bruce Chilton, who has done the most extensive work on the Isaiah

possibility would become likely if it can be shown that the Isaian allusions in 12,1, 9 are original to the parable. What the coincidence does suggest is that *at some level* the parable was influenced by a contemporary exegesis of 5,1-2a, 7 as a figurative description of the temple, and that this exegesis was employed in order to use the parable as a complaint against officers of the Herodian temple."

⁵⁷ Bruce D. Chilton, "Targums," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds., Joel B. Green, and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 802.

⁵⁸ On the existence pre-Christian material in the Targums see Paul E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), 196; Bruce D. Chilton, "Two in One: Renderings of the Book of Isaiah in Targum Jonathan," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition*, eds., Craig C. Broyles, and Craig A. Evans (New York: Brill, 1997), 547-48; idem., *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus' Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time*, Vol. 8, Good News Studies (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc, 1984), 57; Michael B. Shepherd, "Targums, the New Testament, and Biblical Theology of the Messiah," *JETS* 51/1, (2008): 45-48; and Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, second ed. (Vancouver, BC, Canada: Regent College Publishing, 1999), 8-9.

Targum, has made the case that the Isaiah Targum evidences two separate redactional stages, one that is Tannaitic and one that is Amoraic.⁵⁹ Chilton places our text of Isaiah 5 as one of the texts that cannot be successfully assigned to either redaction.⁶⁰ Johannes De Moor, however, notes that the interpretive parallels between this passage in the Targum and material found at Qumran (discussed above) "testify to their venerable age."⁶¹ Therefore, while we have good reason to treat this passage in the Isaiah Targum as an early interpretive text, we must also admit that it possibly reflects a later tradition.

The targumic version of Is. 5:1-7 evinces several significant elements for our understanding of the interpretive history of this text.⁶² The first significant interpretive element in the targumic versions is that from the beginning of the Song the Targum alerts the reader to its allegorical nature by stating: *אשבחיה כען לישראל דמתיל בכרמא* 'I will sing now for *Israel—which is like a vineyard*."⁶³ Evans notes that this establishes the parabolic nature of the Song in that the "Aramaic *מתיל* is the equivalent of the Hebrew *משל*, 'to compare' or to 'recite a parable.'"⁶⁴

A second significant interpretive element is the inclusion of the building of the sanctuary (*מקדש*) and altar (*מזבח*) in the preparation of the vineyard.⁶⁵ Whereas, in the Qumran texts we saw the temple alluded to (4Q500) or the connection between the vineyard and the leadership of Israel implied (4QpIsa^b), here the association of the vineyard with the Temple is made explicit. Though the vineyard imagery is maintained in that it is written that '*I established them as the*

⁵⁹ Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes*, The Aramaic Bible, vol. 11 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1986), xx-xxv, see a shorter treatment in idem., "Two in One," 547-48.

⁶⁰ Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, xxiv.

⁶¹ Johannes C. De Moor, "The Targumic Background of Mark 12:1-12: The Parable of the Wicked Tenants," *JSJ* 29/1, (1998): 66.

⁶² For full text and translation see J.F. Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah*, (New York: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1949), 16-17 and Evans, *Jesus*, 397-98.

⁶³ Unless otherwise noted, all text of the Isaiah Targum will be from Stenning, *Targum*, 16-17 and all translations will be taken from Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 10-11. He notes differences between the Hebrew text and the Targum by italicizing the differences, we will continue that strategy.

⁶⁴ Evans, *Jesus*, 398.

⁶⁵ Chilton, *Galilean Rabbi*, 112; Evans, *Jesus*, 398-401.

plant of a choice vine' (כמיצב גפן), the MT's 'he built a watchtower in its midst' (Heb: ויבן מגדל) (ובבית מקדשי ביניהון) has been fully interpreted as 'I built my sanctuary in their midst' and the MT's 'and he also hewed a wine vat in it' (Heb: וגם־יקב חצב בו) is fully interpreted as 'and I even gave my altar to atone for their sins' (וואף מדבחי יהבית לכפרא על חטאיהון). The antiquity of this interpretation is defended by De Moor who notes that it deviates from the interpretation found in the Babylonian Talmud.⁶⁶ We therefore see a change from an allegorical element to the referent to which the original allegory pointed. This fits the typical strategy of the targuman to 'give the sense' of the Hebrew text for the interpretive benefit of his listeners.⁶⁷

A third interpretive element is the introduction of the concept of 'inheritance' (אחסנא) in the targumic rendering.⁶⁸ In this sense, the vineyard is seen as the inheritance of the people just as the land frequently is in the biblical narrative.⁶⁹ This element is important for its close association with Jesus' parable in that the tenants plot to try and gain the 'inheritance' (κληρονομία) in Mk 12:7.⁷⁰

A fourth important interpretive element is that in place of the Hebrew's "I will remove its hedge" (הסר משוכתו), the Targum has God abandoning His vineyard: 'I will take up my Shekhi-nah from them (אסליק שכינתי מנהון).⁷¹ Evans notes that in referencing God's 'taking up his

⁶⁶ De Moor, "Targumic Background," 70, citing, *bSukka*, 49a. See, however, *jSukka*, 21a; *Tos. Sukka* 3:4 (15).

⁶⁷ See Ch. Rabin, "Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century," in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, eds., S. Safrai, and M. Stern (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976), 1030; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 8-9; Chilton, "Targums," 800-01.

⁶⁸ Evans, *Jesus*, 401, n. 40, notes "that the meturgeman translates the Hebrew נחלה ('inheritance') with אחסנא every time the word appears in Isaiah (19:25; 47:6; 63:17). In all three passages the LXX translates κληρονομία" which is precisely the terminology used in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants.

⁶⁹ De Moor, "Targumic Background," 77, "According to Ps. 78:71 God entrusted this inheritance to David, as he had done earlier to Saul (1 Sam. 10:1). It is therefore hardly accidental that in the Targum to Isa. 5:1 אחסנתא 'inheritance' is an alternative interpretation of the vineyard = Israel."

⁷⁰ Evans, *Jesus*, 401.

⁷¹ Cf. De Moor, "Targumic Background," 67-68. It is interesting to note that though both the Targum and LXX have the concept of divine abandonment, they both interpret this concept in different places. The LXX interpreted ופשיתו בתה ('I will make it a waste') as divine abandonment but the Targum has interpreted הסר משוכתו ('I will remove its hedge') as divine abandonment, perhaps because of the use of סור in texts where God is said to abandon

Shekhinah' the targuman means "the destruction of the Temple itself."⁷² And while this is certainly possible, given that it has replaced 'removing of its hedge,' it is probably more likely that the taking up of the Shekhinah is a reference to Exile, which was present in the biblical narrative but became a classic association in rabbinic thought.⁷³ So where the previous texts we have examined we saw the interpretation of the destruction of the vineyard as removal of divine presence, the meturgeman makes this interpretation more clear and emphatic by the reference to the theologically important Shekhinah.⁷⁴

A final interpretive difference between the Targum and MT is found in v. 5. In place of the MT's 'I will break down its wall' (פרץ גדרו), the Targum reads 'I will break down *the place of their sanctuaries*' (ואיתרע בית מקדשיהון). The plural form of sanctuaries is decidedly odd, but Chilton has argued that it is typical of the Targum to use a singular form of מקדש, as in 5:2, followed by a plural form, as here in 5:5, "so that we are encouraged to think of such places (presumably synagogues) as distinct from the Jerusalem Temple, but as related to it in some way."⁷⁵ If the Targum has synagogues in view here,⁷⁶ as Chilton argues, then we see the meturgeman updating the judgment from Isaiah 5 to his contemporary place in the synagogues. In this way, the judgment upon the Temple is extended to cover the whole of the contemporary Jewish religious leadership.

In summarizing the interpretive importance of the Isaiah Targum we see that it has made even more explicit, elements which were implicitly noted in previous texts we have examined, such as the parabolic nature of the Song, the identification of the vineyard with the Temple and someone, e.g., Samson (Judg. 16:20) and Saul (1 Sam. 16:14; 28:16).

⁷² Evans, *Jesus*, 401.

⁷³ De Moor, "Targumic Background," 67.

⁷⁴ For the importance of the term Shekhinah (שכינה) in the Isaiah Targum see Bruce D. Chilton, *The Glory of Israel: The Theology and Provenience of the Isaiah Targum* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1983), 69-75.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 18; also Chilton, *Galilean Rabbi*, 112.

⁷⁶ De Moor, "Targumic Background," 69-70, disputes that the synagogues were in view here and suggests the emendation: מקדשי ('my sanctuary'), though he has no textual support for this.

the removal of the divine presence. The judgment has also been contemporized and extended to include all the Jewish religious leadership by the inclusion of the synagogues in the judgment. The targumic version of Isa. 5:1-7 has also introduced the concept of inheritance, equating the vineyard with Israel's inheritance, an element which is explicitly in mind in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants.

Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch)

The final text that we will examine is the prologue to the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch). This text has not, to my knowledge, been examined in the discussion of either the Jewish interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard or the Parable of the Wicked Tenants. If we needed to be cautious with our use of the targumic version of the Song of the Vineyard because of its questionable dating, we must be even more cautious here. 3 Baruch is notoriously difficult to date. The date most commonly given is sometime between 2 Enoch (ca., AD 1-50) and Origin (AD 185-254) because of the influence the former had on it and the allusion to it by the latter.⁷⁷ However, even this rough date is in question.⁷⁸ Compounding this difficulty is the obvious Christian redactions in the extant text at 4:15; 13:4 and 15:4.⁷⁹ So prevalent are these Christian 'interpolations' that M.R. James originally described this work as "a Christian Apocalypse of the second century."⁸⁰ The existence of a separate Slavonic version does not help in determining the provenance of this document either. The need, therefore, for treating any conclusions we might draw from an examination of this text lightly should be obvious. For our purposes we will oper-

⁷⁷ H.M. Hughes, "The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch or III Baruch," in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, ed., R.H. Charles (Oxford, England: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1964), 530 and Louis Ginzberg, "Apocalypse of Baruch (Greek)," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, ed., Isidore Singer (New York: Ktav Publishing House, n.d.): 551.

⁷⁸ H.E. Gaylord, Jr., "3 (Greek Apocalypse of) Baruch: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed., James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1983), 656, argues that it cannot be dated decisively.

⁷⁹ Though there are other possible NT echoes at 4:17; 12:6; 13:2; 15:2; 16:2, 3. See Daniel C. Harlow, "The Christianization of Early Jewish Pseudepigrapha: The Case of 3 Baruch," *JSJ* 32/4 (2001): 424.

⁸⁰ M.R. James, "The Apocalypse of Baruch," in *Apocrypha Anecota*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), lxxi.

ate under what is the loosely held consensus view, that the Greek version of 3 Baruch as a fairly accurate representation of a late first or early second century document from the Jewish Diaspora.⁸¹ The usefulness of the document for our purposes is to evince another interpretation contemporary or slightly after Jesus, which helps to place his interpretation within a continuum of Jewish interpretation of Isa. 5:1-7.

It is significant for our purposes that the text we are most interested in (3 Bar. 1:1-2) is the one of the most distinctively Jewish texts in the entire work. Harlow argues that "A concern to minimize the significance of Jerusalem's destruction [the main content of 1:1-2] and hope for its restoration has no parallel in Christianity. Virtually nowhere in early Christianity–Jewish Christianity included–is the destruction of Jerusalem an occasion for lamentation."⁸² This is helpful for our purposes because it gives us the greatest confidence that if any part of 3 Baruch is of early Jewish origin (and the scholarly consensus contends that this is likely), then the text of 1:1-2 is it.⁸³

The important text for our purposes is 3 Baruch 1:1-2. The allusion to the Song of the Vineyard is found in verse 2:

Κύριε, ἵνα τί ἐξέκαυσας τὸν ἀμπελῶνά σου καὶ ἠρήμωσας αὐτόν; τί ἐποίησας τοῦτο; καὶ ἵνα τί, Κύριε, οὐκ ἀπέδωκας ἡμᾶς ἐν ἄλλῃ παιδείᾳ, ἀλλὰ παρέδωκας ἡμᾶς εἰς ἔθνη τοιαῦτα, ὅπως ὄνειδίζοντες λέγουσιν· Ποῦ ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς αὐτῶν;⁸⁴

"Lord, why have you set fire to your vineyard and laid it waste? Why have you done this? And why, Lord, did you not requite us with another punishment, but rather handed us over to such heathen so that they reproach us saying, 'Where is their God?'"⁸⁵

⁸¹ Harlow, "The Case of 3 Baruch," 423; idem., *The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch) in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 206.

⁸² Harlow, "The Case of 3 Baruch," 431. Cf. idem., *Baruch*, 86-108.

⁸³ I do not find Martha Himmelfarb's contention that the opening scene of 3 Baruch could reflect a Christian author placing "Baruch in a conventional setting," to be persuasive ("Review of Daniel C. Harlow, *The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch [3 Baruch] in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity*," *RBL* [posted January, 1998]).

⁸⁴ The Greek text is from J.-C. Picard, ed., "Apocalypsis Baruchi Graece," in *Testamentum Iobi, Apocalypsis Baruchi Graece* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 81-96, as reproduced by The Online Critical Pseudepigrapha (<http://ocp.acadiau.ca/index.html>).

⁸⁵ The translation unless otherwise noted is from Gaylord, "Baruch," 662-79.

This verse is replete with biblical allusions.⁸⁶ The following elements help us to see the allusion to Isa. 5:1-7. The first and most obvious is the reference to the Lord's vineyard (τὸν ἀμπελῶνά σου), which immediately calls to mind the Song of the Vineyard as the quintessential Jewish vineyard text, especially in regard to God's vineyard.⁸⁷ A second element can be found in the question: 'Why have you done this?' (τί ἐποίησας τοῦτο;). The Song of the Vineyard has a wordplay where God asks 'what more was there for me to do (מִדָּה לְעֲשׂוֹת) for my vineyard?' (5:4) and then 'And now I will tell you what I will do (אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה) to my vineyard' (5:5) The relevant phrases 'what more was there for me to do' and 'what I will do' translates in the LXX to τί ποιήσω ἔτι ('what more might I do') and τί ποιήσω ('what I will do').⁸⁸

There are two more minor elements that may be referencing the Song of the Vineyard. First, Baruch laments that God has laid waste (ἠρήμωσας) his vineyard. This concept is reflected in the MT's וְאֲשִׁיתָהּ בַתָּהּ ('And I will make it a waste'), which is changed to the concept of abandonment in the LXX. But the LXX is at pains to maintain the concept of the vineyard as a wasteland by the insertion of a wasteland in the phrase 'a thorn shall come up into it as into a wasteland (ὡς εἰς χέρσον).' This is obviously a parallel thought to Baruch's 'laid waste' (ἠρήμωσας). Second, Baruch references the Lord setting fire (ἐξέκαυσας) to his vineyard. Though the use of burning as judgment is not present in Isa. 5:1-7, in its companion passage, Isa. 27:2-5, there is a proclamation that if the vineyard produces thorns and thistles the Lord 'will burn it up' (אֲצִיתָנָה).⁸⁹

⁸⁶ See Gaylord, "Baruch," 663, who lists among Isa. 5, the texts of Ezek. 15; Pss. 80:8-16; 42:3, 10; 79:10; 115:2; Joel 2:17 and Mic. 7:10.

⁸⁷ Cf. Snodgrass, *Stories*, 287-88.

⁸⁸ Only in these two verses and 10:3 does LXX Isaiah use a construction of τίς + ποιέω in the same sense as 3 Baruch 1:2 and only in Isa. 5 is the context concerning a vineyard, though 10:3 is also concerning divine judgment.

⁸⁹ Isa. 27:4. Though the LXX has completely changed the context of this pronouncement it does include the concept of burning (κατακάω), using the same verbal root as 3 Baruch, κάω.

Therefore, if we can accept an allusion to the Song of the Vineyard based on the above four elements what can we say about Baruch's interpretation of that text? First, the context of Baruch's lamentation is Nebuchadnezzar's plundering of God's city (3 Bar. 1:1). So he has clearly interpreted God's vineyard as Jerusalem and God's judgment on his vineyard as the Babylonian exile. Second, it is generally understood that the author of 3 Baruch's reference to the Babylonian exile is most likely a typology for the real context he is addressing, namely the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE.⁹⁰ So here we see the author of Baruch interpreting his own situation (the destruction of 70 CE) by means of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Jerusalem and subsequent exile by means of the imagery of the Song of the Vineyard. The vineyard imagery has become a vehicle by which to speak of the destruction the author is facing in theological terms that compares it to the judgment the people faced in the Babylonian exile. The importance of this line of interpretation will become evident when we look at Jesus' use of this imagery in his Parable of the Wicked Tenants.

Perhaps the most important element of Baruch's interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard is his association of the destruction of the vineyard with the concept of Israel being handed over (παρέδωκας) to her enemies.⁹¹ Not only has the Lord abandoned his vineyard but he has handed it over 'unto such a nation' (εἰς ἔθνη τοιαῦτα) or as Gaylord translates 'to such heathen.' Thus, for the author of 3 Baruch, the destruction of the vineyard is seen as one of occupation by another nation. The importance of this line of reasoning will become obvious when we look at the role of the tenants in the Parable.

Summary

Having surveyed several examples of Second Temple Jewish exegesis of the Song of the Vineyard, we are now in a place to summarize some of the interpretive tendencies that we come

⁹⁰ Harlow, "The Case of 3 Baruch," 420; idem., *Baruch*, 13f.

⁹¹ Cf. LXX Mic. 6:14 and 16 for another instance where the Lord speaks of handing over (παράδωμι) Israel to destruction by the hand of another people.

to expect in a Second Temple Jewish exegesis of this text. We can categorize these tendencies into 4 categories: 1) allegory, 2) object of judgment, 3) means of judgment, and 4) re-contextualization.

1) *Allegory.* A common element of all the texts that we have examined is that they treat the Song of the Vineyard as an allegory. This is not surprising nor controversial given that 5:7 in the Song itself identifies itself as an allegory and offers some interpretation of its allegorical elements. While all texts have this allegorical element to them, Targum Isaiah has highlighted this by likening the Song of the Vineyard to a parable by its use of the word מַתַּל which "is the equivalent of the Hebrew מַשַּׁל, 'to compare' or to 'recite a parable.'"⁹² In providing the content of the allegorical elements the version of the Song of the Vineyard in the Targum has lost any semblance of a 'realistic' story and has become a full-blown allegorical tale.

2) *Object of Judgment.* Another common element that we have seen in the various interpretations of the Song of the Vineyard is the object of judgment. The overwhelming majority of interpretations of the Song of the Vineyard suggest that the divine judgment is not upon all of Israel (or at least not primarily) but against its leadership. 4QpIsa^b specifically notes that God abandoned the 'men of Judah,' as evidenced by the use of the *plural* pronoun in עֲזַבָם. Both 4Q500 and the Isaiah Targum envisioned the judgment in the context of the Temple, so while judgment comes upon Israel in general, the specific reference to the Temple focuses our attention there.

3) *Means of Judgment.* The MT suggests that judgment will come about in the destruction of the vineyard. However, several of our texts, while still maintaining destruction as a means of judgment have added the concept of the removal of the divine presence. The LXX changes the MT's 'I will make it a wasteland' (וְאַשִּׁיתָהּ בַתֵּה) to 'I will abandon my vineyard' (ἀνήσω τὸν

⁹² Evans, *Jesus*, 398.

ἀμπελῶνά μου). In the Targum the Lord says 'I will take up my Shekhinah from them' (אֶסְלִיק שְׁכִינָתִי מִנְהוֹן). 3 Baruch has gone beyond the concept of God's abandonment of his vineyard and envisioned him handing over (παρέδωκας) Israel to her enemies, to 'such heathen' (ἔθνη τοιαῦτα).

4) *Re-contextualization*. Though the Song of the Vineyard is its own text speaking to its own context, several of the texts we have examined have 're-contextualized' or 'updated' the Song in various ways in order to allow it to speak better to their day. As we saw, the LXX updated the viticultural language the Song uses in order to speak better to a Hellenized society. The Targum has updated the judgment to include the synagogues which were becoming prevalent. 4QpIsa^b changed the text of Isa. 5:5b in order for it to speak to their situation, which they saw as between one judgment and a future final judgment. 3 Baruch played on the theme of the destruction of the vineyard as the Babylonian invasion in order to reference the major destruction of his own day, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE.

Jesus' Interpretation: The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

With a Second Temple Jewish interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard firmly in mind we are now in a place to examine Jesus' Parable of the Wicked Tenants. Space prohibits us from a complete exegesis of this text but in the little attention we are able to give this parable it will become clear how extensively this parable fits within the Second Temple Jewish interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard. We will examine Jesus' Parable by an examination of 1) the elements of the Parable which are characteristic of Jewish interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard and 2) the elements of the Parable which are characteristic of Jesus' own mission and understanding. In so doing, we will see that Jesus' interpretation is both credibly Jewish and characteristically

controversial so as to upset the authorities and to lead to Christianity's eventual break with Judaism.

Characteristically Jewish

The first thing we must notice in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants is that in each of the Synoptic Gospels it occurs in the context of an indictment against the Temple. The flow of narrative is very similar in each of the Synoptics, wherein Jesus' Temple action (Mk. 11:15-19/Matt. 21:12-13/ Lk. 19:45-46) is followed closely by Jesus cursing a fig tree (Mk. 11:12-14, 20-24⁹³/Matt. 21:18-22), the episode of the Jewish leadership questioning Jesus' authority (Mk. 11:27-31/Matt. 21:23-27/Lk. 20:1-8) and the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mk. 12:1-9/Matt. 21:28-22:14⁹⁴/Lk. 20:9-19). Though each of the Evangelists varies the order of events slightly, the similarity of the narrative flow is striking. In each case the Parable of the Wicked Tenants functions as a climactic section of judgment against the Temple establishment.⁹⁵ Thus we can see that the context in which Jesus tells his parable is perfectly in line with context of judgment against the Temple or Jewish leadership that we saw in 4QpIsa^b, 4Q500 and Targum Isaiah.⁹⁶

The second thing we must notice is that the Parable of the Wicked Tenants begins with an allusion to the LXX version of the Song of the Vineyard.⁹⁷ Though it is possible that the allusion

⁹³ Mark has split the incident of the fig tree so that it functions as an *inclusio* around the Temple action, in this sense, the use of the fig tree as an interpretation of Jesus' Temple action is even clearer.

⁹⁴ Matthew has included the Parable of the Wicked Tenants in a trilogy of parables of indictment against the Jewish leadership. This seems to be the way that Matthew interprets Jesus' Temple action, much the same way that Mark enclosed the Temple action within the *inclusio* of the fig tree incident.

⁹⁵ Cf. N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 498 and Allan W. Martens, "'Produce Fruit Worthy of Repentance': Parables of Judgment against the Jewish Religious Leaders and the Nation (Matt 21:28-22:14, par.; Luke 13:6-9)," in Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2000), 152.

⁹⁶ Cf. Brooke, "4Q500," 255-56; Craig A. Evans, "How Septuagintal is Isa. 5:1-7 in Mark 12:1-9? *NovT* 45/2 (2003), 107-09 and De Moor, "Targumic Background," 70-71.

⁹⁷ We will interact with the Markan version of this parable in 12:1-9. Assuming a Markan priority this is a natural place to interact with Jesus' exegesis. However, the Matthean version of this parable (21:33-46) differs from Mark in very few places and while the Lukan version (20:9-19) has seemingly downplayed the Isaian reference it is nonetheless there and interprets it much the same way as Mark and Matthew. For the allusion to Isa. 5:1-7 in Luke 20:9-19 see Charles A. Kimball, III, "Jesus' Exposition of Scripture in Luke 20:9-19: An Inquiry in Light of Jewish Hermeneutics," *BBR* 3 (1993): 77-92.

to the LXX text "took place as the Gospel tradition evolved from Aramaic into Greek,"⁹⁸ it is just as likely that it is said that the owner 'built a fence' (περιέθηκεν φραγμὸν) and 'dug a winepress' (ὠρυξεν ὑπολήνιον) so that, like in the LXX, the viticultural language reflects that which is familiar to a now heavily Hellenized culture. But it must be said, that even if the textual allusion to LXX Isa. 5:1-2 is later it probably developed to clarify the already present allusion to the Song of the Vineyard.⁹⁹ Beyond the updating in viticultural language, the importance of the allusion to the Isaiah text is that it provides an allegorical key for interpreting the parable¹⁰⁰ so that in its present context it cannot but be interpreted as an allegorical story of Israel's salvation history up to the point of the coming of Jesus.¹⁰¹

Next, the parable turns from the familiar setting of the Song of the Vineyard to speak of the owner handing over (ἐξέδετο) the vineyard to tenants and going into another country (ἀπεδήμησεν). While this is often seen as the point at which the Parable departs from the Song, it is actually continuing the story. As we saw, Second Temple interpreters understood the judgment upon the vineyard as a removal of the divine presence (so LXX and Targum Isaiah). Furthermore, the author of 3 Baruch understood the judgment on the vineyard as God handing over (παρέδωκας) the vineyard over to another people (ἔθνη), using the same language as the Parable. Thus, the Parable sets the scene for its story as a time when the divine presence has already been removed¹⁰² and the 'vineyard' is under the tenancy of another people.¹⁰³ Therefore, the set-

⁹⁸ Evans, "How Septuagintal," 106.

⁹⁹ So Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 721-22; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 287-88; Brooke, "4Q500," 249-53; Wim J.C. Weren, "The Use of Isaiah 5,1-7 in the Parable of the Tenants (Mark 12,1-12; Matthew 21,33-46)," *Biblica* 79 (1998): 1-26, esp., 9-13; Evans, *Mark*, 224-28.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁰¹ It must be noted that even Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 219-20, accepts this fact. He, however, argues that the Markan context is a later redaction.

¹⁰² De Moor, "Targumic Background," 67-68.

¹⁰³ Though it is not our purpose here, this interpretation makes perfect sense of the reaction of the chief priests and elders in the Matthean version of this parable (21:41). It is puzzling why the chief priests and elders would be so confused as to pronounce judgment upon themselves only to later understand "that he was speaking about them" (21:45). If, however, they recognized the setting in which Jesus' placed his parable they would have initially understood the tenants to be those under whose rule they were living, most probably the Romans. However, when Jesus states that "the kingdom of God will be taken away from you" (21:43), they realized that he was portraying

ting of Jesus' parable is very similar to that of 4QpIsa^b where one judgment has been enacted, the divine presence has been removed, but a further judgment is coming: in 4QpIsa^b 'there shall come up briars' and in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants the owner will 'come and destroy the tenants.'

The next place that the Parable differs from the Song is in the sending, beating and killing of the servants leading up to the sending and killing of the son. These are elements that are new to the Parable but they are not completely foreign to the context of the Song of the Vineyard. Evans has pointed out that the tenants' killing of the son "may cohere with the Hebrew's מִשָּׁפַח ('bloodshed')."¹⁰⁴ Thus the beating and killing of the servants and the son are very likely the kind of מִשָּׁפַח that Jesus' saw being perpetrated in the Song of the Vineyard.

Finally, the Parable ends with the owner of the vineyard giving or handing over (δίδωμι) the vineyard to others. Interestingly, while Mark and Luke refer to the owner giving the vineyard to others (ἄλλοις), when Matthew interprets the Parable he refers to God giving the kingdom of God over to 'a people' (ἔθνει).¹⁰⁵ This is precisely the same language that 3 Baruch used in speaking of God handing over his people (παράδιδωμι) to 'such a people' (ἔθνη τοιαῦτα).¹⁰⁶

We have now looked at several interpretive elements in Jesus' Parable of the Wicked Tenants. In doing so we have seen that in each case, Jesus' interpretation fits squarely within the trend of Second Temple Jewish interpretation that we have discussed, and while we have by no

them as the tenants, which is of course why they wanted to arrest him (21:46). Though Mark and Luke have Jesus answer his own rhetorical question: 'what will the owner of the vineyard do?' This juridical style is original to the Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah and is one of the reasons Klyne R. Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants* (Tubingen: J.C. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1983), 56-59, argues for Matthean priority for this parable.

¹⁰⁴ Evans, "How Septuagintal," 107; idem., *Mark*, 226.

¹⁰⁵ Mk. 12:9/Matt. 21:41, 43/Lk. 20:16.

¹⁰⁶ I recognize that I used this same parallel to discuss Jesus' setting of this Parable when he speaks of the owner handing over (ἐκδίδωμι) the vineyard to tenants. But the way that a juridical parable works is to cause the listener to come to a point of self condemnation. In Jesus' version of the Parable, the initial handing over of the vineyard to tenants would not have been seen as judgment because the tenants were Israel's leaders, though I submit this is how Jesus' hearers would have interpreted this 'handing over' (see above n. 103). The point in Jesus' Parable is that the real judgment comes when the owner returns to those he originally left in charge, destroys them, and hands over (δώσει) the vineyard to others.

means exhausted the parallels between Jesus' Parable of the Wicked Tenants and other Second Temple interpretations,¹⁰⁷ the examples we have given show that even Jesus' distinct interpretations are well in line with Second Temple exegesis of the Song of the Vineyard.

Characteristically Jesus

We have now established that most of the elements of the Parable are characteristically Jewish, including its allegorical interpretation/application of the Song. We are now in a place to look at the one element that breaks with Second Temple Jewish interpretations: Jesus' self-referential use of the rejected son.

The reference to the son is perhaps the most difficult element of the Parable for many interpreters to accept. It is this element which "cohere[s] so perfectly with the view after Easter, [that] one can scarcely exclude a community origin."¹⁰⁸ But we must recall that what we are after is comprehensive yet crucifiable Jesus. One who fits in the first century and yet causes quite a stir there. In addition, several elements tell against the inclusion of the son in this parable as a Christian addition. First, even *GThom* 65, which has seemingly made a great effort to remove any allegorical reference includes the son being sent and killed, so that its presence in the original form of the parable is not in question.

Second, as N.T. Wright has pointed out, the narrative of the Parable as it stands has the son failing in his mission to get the tenants to obey and the story ends with the son having died a failure.¹⁰⁹ This is hardly a likely Christian interpretation, and one could argue that the category of embarrassment would argue for the historical originality of this part of the Parable. If this were a Christian interpolation we would expect a clear reference to the resurrection which is noticeably missing.¹¹⁰ True the inclusion of the quotation from Psalm 118 about the rejected stone mitigates

¹⁰⁷ For further parallels see the studies often referenced in this paper: Evans, *Jesus*, 381-406; idem., "How Septuagintal," 105-10; De Moor, "Targumic Background," 63-80; and Chilton, *Galilean Rabbi*, 111-14.

¹⁰⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:178.

¹⁰⁹ N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 75-76.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Snodgrass, *Stories*, 296, "the parable is too indirect to be the confession of the early church."

some of the tension of the son dead and his failing his mission, but the stone reference is not clearly a reference to the resurrection,¹¹¹ at least not the explicit reference to the resurrection we would expect if this text were *ex eventu*,¹¹² and it is included in every extant version of the Parable including *GThom* 65-66.¹¹³

Third, the claim that the Parable as it stands "presupposes a specifically Christian confession that the Messiah is the 'son of God'"¹¹⁴ misses the point that De Moor has made that, the reference to the man's son being sent is likely a reference to the 'Son of Man' (υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου) from Dan. 7:13, which "is attested in some Jewish sources up to the second century to become obsolete afterwards as a result of the Jewish-Christian controversy."¹¹⁵ It is unlikely, therefore, that this is a later Christian confession.

Fourth, the argument that the synoptic form of the Parable looks too much like a post-Easter confession is actually placing significantly too much weight on the negative use of the criterion of dissimilarity. The presence of an element dissimilar to typical professions of the post-Easter church is a strong argument for historicity but to argue that the reverse is also true is a fallacy,¹¹⁶ Jesus is, after all, the founder of Christianity and it would be surprising if his message was not similar in most regards to the faith he founded.

¹¹¹ Though it does become a passage for the resurrection (Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:4, 7), perhaps because of its usage here?

¹¹² Cf. Wright, *Jesus*, 501, esp. n. 86.

¹¹³ Malcolm Lowe, "From the Parable of the Vineyard to a Pre-Synoptic Source," *NTS* 28 (1982): 259-60, finds the stone saying to be an original element following the parable. That Kloppenborg finds the context of *GThom* 65 important in light of the previous two logion (63, 64) and finds support for his interpretation of the Parable as a story about a foolish vineyard owner based on this context but argues that logion 66, which follows directly after the Parable in *GThom*, is "a separate saying of Jesus, having no grammatical or logical relationship to the previous saying" (Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 148; reference to the context of *GThom* 65 is on p. 33) seems an inconsistent methodology. Much more likely is the case that the stone saying in *GThom* 66 follows the parable in *GThom* 65 because it was well known in the tradition that the stone allusion always followed the Parable of the Wicked Tenants.

¹¹⁴ Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 67.

¹¹⁵ De Moor, "Targumic Background," 66-67.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Ben F. Meyer, *Critical Realism and the New Testament* (San Jose, CA: Pickwick Publications, 1989), 131, the presence of dissimilar statements "positively tells in favor of historicity, but their absence does not positively tell against historicity."

Finally, we must note that if we are looking for a characteristic Jesus, then one who challenged the established religious authorities, expected suffering to come on himself and his followers, and announced coming judgment is exactly what we would plausibly expect.¹¹⁷ That Jesus saw himself in the prophetic tradition¹¹⁸ is commonly accepted.¹¹⁹ That Jesus expected suffering and rejection for his disciples¹²⁰ and that he would suffer "martyrdom in Jerusalem as part of the prophetic office"¹²¹ is entirely plausible. Finally, that Jesus proclaimed a coming judgment, especially on the religious leadership of his day should not be in doubt.¹²² If the Jesus just described is accurate, then it is entirely historically plausible, and in fact historically probable, that he told a parable very similar to the one in Mk. 12:1-9, complete with his self-referential picture as a climactic prophet, announcing judgment and expecting rejection.

Conclusion

What then can we say by way of conclusion? We have seen that there are several interpretive commonalities in Second Temple Jewish interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard which include 1) reading it as an allegory, 2) viewing the judgment as primarily on Jewish leadership, 3) viewing the destruction as removal of divine presence, and 4) re-contextualizing the interpretation to fit present circumstances. We have also seen that Jesus' interpretation of the Song fits within this realm of interpretation. Rather than being overtly Christian, the allegorical elements in Jesus' Parable of the Wicked Tenants are in fact Jewish in provenance.¹²³ Furthermore,

¹¹⁷ See Dunn, *Jesus*, 412-25, and his comment on p. 722, "the basic parable accords well with the central thrusts in Jesus' preaching elsewhere, particularly the evocation of the well-established theme of prophet rejection and the expectation of judgment on Israel. . . ."

¹¹⁸ E.g., Mark 6:4/Matt. 13:57/Luke 4:24/*GThom* 31; Luke 13:31-33; cf. Matt. 23:29-36/Luke 11:47-51 and Matt. 23:37-39/Luke 13:34-35.

¹¹⁹ Dunn, *Jesus*, 660-64; Wright, *Jesus*, 162-68.

¹²⁰ E.g., Mk. 13:9-13; Matt. 10:16-39. See further, Dunn, *Jesus*, 417-20.

¹²¹ Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, *The Proclamation of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 280; Dunn, *Jesus*, 796-805; Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 429-30. For a review of the issues see Scot McKnight, "Jesus and his death: Some Recent Scholarship," *CB:BS* 9 (2001): 185-228.

¹²² E.g., Mt. 8:11-12/Lk. 13:28-29; Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43; Mt. 13:47-50; Mt. 24:45-51/Lk. 12:42-6 Mt. 12:39-41/Lk. 11:29-32; Mt. 23:37/Lk. 13:34; Mt. 23:38/Lk. 13:35; etc. See particularly Wright, *Jesus*, 182-86, 322-46; Dunn, *Jesus*, 420-25; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 114-15.

¹²³ Cf. De Moor, "Targumic Background," 79-80 and Brooke, "4Q500," 260.

the context of the Parable as being especially concerned with Jesus' judgment against the Temple establishment is well attested in other Jewish interpretations, namely 4QpIsa^b, 4Q500 and the Targumic version of the Song.¹²⁴ What we are left with is a plausibly Jewish interpretation of the Song of the Vineyard with the addition of Jesus' understanding of his own role within the story as the final climactic prophet facing the climactic rejection in the tradition of rejected prophets.

I submit that this paper has not proven the originality of this parable as it exists in the synoptic context. It must be regarded as a fallacy to assume that lining up a convincing number of 'criteria' somehow *proves* the case for any given text.¹²⁵ Instead, all we can do is make a case for the plausibility of any pericope given what we know of Jesus' historical situation and what we believe to be an accurate overall picture of him.¹²⁶ That being said, what this paper has strived to show is that the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, as it exists in its synoptic context fits these criteria quite well. It is both plausibly Jewish enough to fit Jesus' context and plausibly controversial enough to explain the following effect of Jesus' consequent crucifixion and the belief of the early Christian faith. Whether or not we see some of the synoptic elements of the Parable as later additions or not, I submit that the original Parable as Jesus told it both looked like the synoptic version of the Parable and conveyed the same meaning.

¹²⁴ Cf. Brook, "4Q500," 260; Baumgarten, "4Q500," 6; Evans, "How Septuagintal," 108-09.

¹²⁵ Cf. Meyer's abandoning the hard-line language of criteria for the "more modest term 'indeces'" (*Critical Realism*, 130).

¹²⁶ Thus I find myself within the framework of Critical Realism. See Meyer, *Critical Realism*; Wright, *New Testament*, 31-46, and also 61-69; and Dunn, *Jesus*, 110-11.

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