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Parable Of The Tenants

“Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.”
Luke 20:13,14, See also Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12

Intro:

Trillions of dollars have been spent and millions of lives lost in the middle east all over the issue of who does the land of Israel belong to? The Jews say it's their land because God gave it to them and the Arabs say it belongs to them because they have lived there for centuries. And on the outside there are proponents and opponents on both sides of the issue, with many Christians and churches taking the side of Israel saying that the land belongs to them. And still others saying, why can't they both live there?

For Christians, this should be a doctrinal, not an emotional issue. A doctrinal issue that is based upon the whole of the teaching of the Word of God on the matter and not upon one misinterpreted, misunderstood, misconstrued verse of Scriptures. To clarify who is “The Seed” that the land belongs to mentioned by God to Abraham, see my on line study, “The Seed”.

One of the problems that has led to so much misunderstanding on the matter is the incorrect usage of terms that people really don't understand. Possessive terms such as: mine, theirs, ours and belongs to, and incorrectly associating every sort of meaning to the subject has just confused the whole thing. They say, the land is Israel's! But what does that mean? God gave the land to the Jews! What does that mean? Israel owns the land! But, again, what is meant when you use the word own?

A. Some honest questions

- Does the land in question belong to Israel today?
- Did Israel at any time ever own the land?
- What was Israel's legal status concerning the land?
- Did Israel at any time ever hold legal title to the land?
- Was Israel the owner of the land?
- Or was Israel a tenant on the land?
- Who owns the land in the sense of holding the legal title to it?
- Did God ever convey the land title over to Israel?
- Who is the aforementioned heir of the land?
- Could Christ be the heir of the land, if his Father did not own the land?
- In what sense did God give Israel the land?
- Were there conditions for living on the land?
- Is there a difference between a title of possession and a title of ownership?
- How does one own property? How does he get title to it?
- Are there colors of title?
- Who owns the earth in the first place?

B. Some legal terms concerning real property.

Obviously this is not an in-depth study on real property law, but to have a glimpse at some of the concepts involved to give us enough knowledge on the subject, so that we can see the differences that are going on in this whole matter.

We might begin with the question of **how does one gain the title to something?** We'll talk about deeds later on, but we want to look at the first right to the title of something is by right of manufacturing something, making something, or creating something. **When you create or make something with your hands, then you own it in every sense of the word.** You own it in the sense of possession and you own it in the sense of title. You can keep it, break it, throw it away, sell it to someone else, or give it away. (If you sell something to someone, or even give it to them, it is always wise to convey the title to the item, via a Bill of Sale, or the receipt.)

Now when a manufacturer makes something, he **owns** it in every sense of the word. He owns it in the sense of possession and he owns it in the sense of title. When a wholesaler buys the item from him, the item is shipped to them with its invoice. The wholesaler now owns the item in the sense of possession and title, for the **invoice is the conveyance of the title** over to the wholesaler from the manufacturer.

This same procedure is followed when the wholesaler sells the item to a retailer, who now **owns** the item and has the possession and the title contained in the invoice. And the retailer does the same thing when he sells it to his customer. When the customer buys the item he now takes possession of it, after the exchange of money, and the receipt is his title to the item.

When automobile manufacturers make cars, they hold the title to them by right of manufacturing them. Because they made the car, they now **own** it in every sense of the word. They have the literal possession of the car and they hold the title to it. Then they ship the car off to their dealers with its title. But this is where things differ with cars. When the dealer sells the car to his customer, a change takes place when the customer signs the *packet of nine*, which includes a Power of Attorney. The State now holds the title of ownership, while the customer has the title of possession.

Ownership is where a person has the exclusive rights to and control over real property. The property is his and he can do with it as he pleases. He can sell it, give it away, rent it, lease it, or allow someone to live on it. If he rents it, leases it, or allows someone to live on it, he can attach conditions on how the property is to be treated by the property's inhabitants.

To **possess** property is to hold, occupy, reside in, to have control, or limited control, over property without regard to ownership. One can own property without possessing it in the sense of living on it; and one can possess property, in the sense of living on it and enjoying it, without being its owner.

Title is the legal term used to denote legal ownership of real property by a person. It clarifies who the legal owner of the property is and who has the legal right to possess the property.

An **inhabitant** is one who dwells or resides permanently in a place, town, or property, as distinguished from a transient lodger or visitor. He or she can be the owner of the property, or a lessee.

Conditions can be attached to the selling of property, renting of the property, or the allowing of others to live on the property. A condition is something demanded, a restriction, as an essential part of an agreement, provision, stipulation.

Rightful owner is an expression that is used to denote who the legal owner of a property is and he alone has the right to stipulate how his property is treated, or place restrictions on what can be done **on** his property, or **to** his property.

Color of title refers to property **deeds**, which are claims of title to the land. The deed colors the title to show who the new owner of the land is. Actual title to the land is secured by an irrefutable instrument, such as a Land Patent.

A **Land Patent** is the evidence of the original right, ownership and title of the land. The one who holds the land patent holds the highest title of the land and is the absolute owner of the land. Deeds to the land may be granted and conveyed to others over the years, but the actual owner of the land is the one who holds the land patent.

Even though millions of British subjects may *own* their land in England, through the colors of title of deeds, their ownership is the ownership of possession, for the Queen of England holds the highest and absolute title to all land.

In America, except in some cases, as also in the Cantons of Switzerland, the county holds the title to the land and the people have colors of title making the county the highest owners of the land. That's why the county can tax it, condemn it, take it from you and restrict what you do on it. If you actually **owned** your land, then no one could tell you what you could and couldn't do with it, or take it from you.

Allodial title is inalienable. It cannot be taxed, encumbered in any way, have liens placed against it and it cannot be taken from its owner by any operation of law whatsoever. It was the highest form of title found in the US.

Now the reason why this is so important to us is because of the problems going on in the Mid-East. The Jews claim that the land is theirs because God **gave** it to them. Many Christians in America join in with the same theme saying that God **gave** Israel the land. It's **theirs** they say; they **own** the land; God entered into an unconditional covenant with Abraham to **give** him and his seed the land forever! And any query on the matter is met with fierce resistance and hostility.

So let's start at the beginning. God stated that the earth was **his**. The **whole** earth! "*Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: **for all the earth is mine.***" Exodus 19:5

He also stated that he not only owned the entire earth; but that he also owns every living thing on the earth! "*For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are **mine.***" Psalms 50:10,11

Now we have to go back to the beginning to determine **by what right does God own the earth** and everything on it! And it goes back to the basic right of manufacturing. When someone makes something, or creates something, then whatever it is that they have made belongs to them. They own it in every sense of the word.

And we find that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*" Genesis 1:1 And due to him being the **one who made them**, he alone is the **rightful owner** and holds the **title** to them!

The next thing that we see is God made all the trees, plants, water, creeping things, birds, animals and so on and placed them on the earth. This makes him the rightful owner to everything on the earth! And because he made them in such a way that they self propagate, then it means that everything that they produce, everything that comes from them belongs to him also!

The next thing that we see is that God made both the man and the woman and placed them on his earth. *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”* Genesis 1:26,27 And because God made man he is the legal owner of man.

The next thing that we see is that God placed man in the garden and gave him instructions on what he wanted the man to do in His garden. *“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”* Genesis 1:28

And God also placed conditions on the man as to what he could do and couldn't do on His earth! *“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* Genesis 2:16,17

Now Adam's commission from God was to possess the land, enjoy the land, have dominion over the land, to see the land grow and develop and so on. **But no where at any time did God ever transfer the title of the earth over to Adam!** Adam possessed the land; he was an inhabitant on the land; it was *his* to enjoy, but he was not the owner of the land!

God held the title to the land because he had made it, **but he never transferred title over to Adam!** Now this will be extremely important later on, because when Adam submitted himself to Satan, through his disobedience to God, the devil took over rulership over the earth, **but he never got the title to it!** **The reason why he couldn't get the title to it is because Adam never had it in the first place!**

The nation of **Israel did not own the land.** They have never owned the land! They only had possession of the land, but they did not own it! God has held title to the land since the beginning and never transferred the title of ownership over to the Israelites. In fact, there were other people already living on the land before the Israelites, and because God was the rightful and sole owner of the land, he brought in the Israelites to dispossess them!

Now this is extremely important to understand, if the Israelites had owned the land in the sense of holding title to it, then there was no way that Christ could have become the heir, (*“This is the heir”*, Mt. 21:38) for Israel would have had the title. If God was going to give the land to his **Son**, (*“They will reverence my son.”*, Matthew 21:37), then God would have to hold the title to the land of Israel!

How can I give another man's property to my son as his inheritance? I cannot give that which does not belong to me! I cannot take another man's property and make my son the heir of it. To do this, to give my property away as an inheritance to my son, then I have to hold the title to it. Christ is the heir, the titleholder, of the land of Israel, even though others are possessing it as inhabitants.

To help in understanding this, let's suppose that you had inherited a piece of property thousands of miles away in another country. Now the property is yours and you hold the title to it, but you had not taken possession of it as yet. But at the same time there was somebody else living on the property; they are the inhabitants; they are in possession. Now they may be squatters, and then again, they may have had permission to live there. Whichever the case may be, they are in possession at the moment, but they are not its owners, you are, because you hold the title to it.

This is the relationship that Israel had to the property in question. At no time did they own the land, God did. God was its owner, he held the title to the land, and he gave the land to his Son, Jesus Christ. God gave the land to Israel to possess not to own! And Paul was quite clear when he explained Genesis 12:7, "*And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto **thy seed will I give this land**: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.*" and said that the seed referred to Jesus Christ! "*Now to Abraham and his **seed** were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy **seed**, which is **Christ**.*" Galatians 3:16

What has happened to millions of Christians throughout the country is that they have misconstrued what was meant by the statement that God gave the land to Israel; they have taken it in the wrong sense! They have misconstrued it to mean that God gave them the land as theirs to own, when instead he gave them the land to possess! And there's a world of difference between the two.

God gave Israel the land to possess, but he did not transfer ownership of the land over to them. Instead, he retained ownership himself, (the title to it), and transferred the title of ownership of the land of Israel over to his Son, Jesus Christ, who is the legitimate heir of Israel and its rightful owner. And for almost two thousand years there has been all kinds of people living on the land as inhabitants, Jews, Christians, Arabs, **none of which have any legal claim to the land for it belongs to Jesus Christ**.

And even when Israel did live on the land, their "right" of possession, to stay on the land, was dependent upon the conditions as God laid out in his covenant with them. By the way, if you truly own land, if you truly hold the title to the land and it's truly yours, then no one else can lay conditions on what you do with it, what you do on it, or what you do personally!

Yet there were all kinds of conditions that God imposed on the Israelites. Conditions of how they treated the land itself, letting it lie fallow, etc.; conditions of how they treated their animals; how they prepared their animals, what animals they could eat and couldn't eat; conditions on how they treated the aliens who came to live in the land; conditions on how they treated each other; conditions on how they lived their lives; conditions on commerce; ten percent tax to the temple; ten percent tax for the running of the government; ten percent tax every three years for the poor; conditions on who they could worship and couldn't worship, conditions, conditions, conditions.

Now when you start running into any conditions at all, even just a few of them, but even more so with the multitude of conditions we find in this covenant agreement he had with Israel, which they had to agree to, then what we are seeing is an agreement concerning possession, or a lessee agreement and not **ownership**! And why? Because God was the owner of the land! And these were the conditions they had to agree to to live on his land!

Now there will always be those out there whose minds will not be changed by the truth regardless of evidence of the Scriptures. But maybe they will listen to what Christ had to say concerning Israel's legal status on the land, that they were not the owners of the land, only **tenants on the land**.

A. Tenants on the land.

“Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and **let it out** to husbandmen, and went into a far country:” Matthew 21:33

“And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and **let it out** to husbandmen, and went into a far country.” Mark 12:1

“Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and **let it forth** to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.” Luke 20:9

The three Apostles, Matthew, Mark and Luke all record what Christ had to say about Israel's legal status was concerning the land and Christ states that they were **lessees** on the land, not the owners of it! The Lord makes very clear that **the owner** of the land was **God the Father!**

He begins with a parable. A parable was to place one thing alongside some thing else as a comparison to aid in understanding. The concept(s) used in a parable was usually about something that the people were familiar with, (in this case agriculture), and because they had familiarity with the concept, it would be easier for them to understand the point(s) of the truth being brought out.

Luke begins with the statement that a certain man did something. Now when we have this word, certain, used in a parable we know that he is not talking about a hypothetical situation, but about a real person and a real life situation.

Now Mark and Luke call him a certain man, while Matthew refers to him as a householder, *oikodespotes*. The *oikodespotes* was the absolute ruler over property, or a household, and everyone and everything in it, because he was its **owner**. So what we see so far is that this *certain* man was the legal owner of the property, as in the older English sense of the landlord.

The next thing that we see is that he planted a vineyard on it, which tells us that the crop was grapes; he hedged it round about, which meant that he built a stone fence all around the entire property to keep out the wild animals and at great expense; he digged a winepress in it, so he could process the grapes on site, another great expense; and built a tower, so the workers could watch out for thieves and fire, another great expense, the word for tower, *purgos*, also referred to farm buildings used for bottling, distribution and storage; and then he let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

What this tells us that this was no small time operation where the owner would grow and cultivate his grapes for his own personal use and sell the surplus locally, but a large commercial operation, where every detail was covered and no expense was spared in its set up. And also by the fact that he was not going to be doing the work himself by his leasing it out to others. This tells us that he had other business going on in other places.

The next thing that we see is that he “*let it out*”, *ekdidomi*, to husbandmen, or farmers. The word and the context defines what these farmer's relationship to the property was – they were **lessees**! It was the man who **owned** the property; it was the man who held the **title** to the property; it was the man who leased it out to them and they simply possessed it, and that upon conditions.

We see that the farmers were **lessees** on the land and not the **owners** of the land, because first of all it states that the certain man already owned the land; second, he made improvements on the land; three, he let it out to others; four, he sent servants back to collect on what the land produced.

We see also that the legal arrangement of payment between the farmers and the landlord, in this case an absentee landlord because he was not on or near the site, was based upon a sharing in the crop and not rent. Rent would be where you paid a certain amount of money per month for living on the property, or working it, regardless of whether it produced any fruit or not. But when you get into a crop sharing arrangement, then you only pay a percentage of what the crop produced!

In the middle east in those days this was a very common practice, because many people did not own land, and certainly not the amount of land talked about in this commercial enterprise. It would have been extremely difficult for a few farmers to be able to amass this large amount of land. So this was really a good deal for them because the owner of the land, (land that they didn't have to buy, and land that they certainly couldn't afford), spent a great deal of capital investment on the land and got it to the place that it was a large scale, quality operation. And all they had to do, without putting a single shekel of their own money into it, is work the land and render the owner a percentage of what it produced!

The Lord is using this parable to refer to: God the Father, Jesus Christ his Son, the OT prophets of God, the nation of Israel, the people of Israel, the religious leaders of Israel, the geographical property known as Israel, the title to the land, who the titleholder is, (God the Father, not Israel), the legal status of the nation of Israel concerning the land, that they did not own it, that they did not hold the title to it, that they were lessees on the land, and that Jesus Christ is the heir of the land and that the land is his inheritance from his Father!

The next thing that we see is that as the time of harvest drew near the owner of the land sent a servant to collect the percentage of the harvest that was due him. *“And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.”* Mark 12:2 The word for season is *kairos* and refers to one of the four annual seasons, or the time of harvest. By having the servant there, obviously he did not believe that a force of more was needed, he would ensure an accurate count. But the outcome of this was a beating and being sent away empty handed. *“And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.”* Mark 12:3

So the master sent another servant to them to collect his due, but the result was the same again. *“And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.”* Mark 12:4 So he sent another servant to them to collect his due, and other servants after him, all with the same result again. *“And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.”* Mark 12:5

Finally he decided to send his son, his beloved and only son. In those days the custom was that a man's son was highly respected by all in society. Passing down the family gene line of a man was something valued by all, and so, whenever a man's son was sent out as the representative of the father's business, he was immediately accepted and respected by the men his father was doing business with and the other men in society. They showed no respect for his servants, but surely they would respect his only son. *“But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.”* Matthew 21:37 Servants came and went in society and basically they had no social status at all, but a man's son, he was valued above all things!

But when the lessees, who were in possession of the man's property, saw the son, they conspired to kill him and steal his inheritance of the land and keep it for themselves! “*But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.*” Matthew 21:38 “*But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.*” Mark 12:7 “*But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.*” Luke 20:14

Matthew and Luke both use the aorist active participle of *horaō* when they said that the workers saw the son, “*but when the husbandmen having seen him*”. Then they got into a conversation among themselves to discuss what they were going to do. Matthew said that, “*they talked among themselves*”, *eipon en heautois*. Mark said that, “*they talked face to face with each other*”, *eipon pros heautois*. And Luke said that, “*they reasoned among themselves*”, *dielozizonto pros heautois* .

Now the word *horaō* meant to see something with the eyes, but also to start having ideas with the mind. And we want to note that when the son came out to the site, they knew that he was the son of the man who leased the vineyard out to them and they knew that he was the legitimate heir of the property! When they saw the son, the wheels of their evil minds started to turn and they figured that they had the opportunity to have the property for themselves, **all they had to do was get rid of the son!**

That's where the next phase of all this kicked in where they began discussing among themselves what to do about it. *Dialogizomai* meant to discuss, to reason together, to figure something out. How can we keep the property for ourselves and not have to pay the man anything? And they came up with their own evil idea and that was to **murder his son!**

Matthew 21:38 is very clear in this for he writes, “*This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.*”, for he said that **they knew that the son was the son of the father, that they knew that he was the heir of the land, and that they all conspired to murder him!**

And he also uses the word *katecho* here that the translators have rendered as, to seize his inheritance. *Katecho* actually meant to take possession of something, or to retain possession of something, or to keep in one's possession. They were working the land owned by someone else. The land they were working was the inheritance of the owner's son. They simply were in possession of the land. So they figured by murdering the owner's son they could keep the land in their possession!

Luke 20:14 records it as, “*But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.*”, ουτος εστιν ο κληρονομος δευτε αποκτεινωμεν αυτον ινα ημων γενηται η κληρονομια.

The word be here is the aorist middle subjunctive of *ginomai*. Now *ginomai* signifies a change of condition or state. Something that was not, now is, and it means to become something. And should be translated as, “*that the inheritance may become ours!*” The inheritance was the **son's** and they wanted it to be **theirs!** So what this is stating is the the inheritance, the nation and land of Israel was not theirs, it never was theirs, it belonged to Christ!

Hina plus the subjunctive mood is used here to denote a purpose clause. Whatever is being talked about is being done for a purpose. **Which tells us that these men conspired together to kill the Lord Jesus Christ for the purpose of stealing his inheritance from the Father!**

The Lord continued on in the story of the parable and said that these wicked men then cast him outside the vineyard and killed him, which is referring to himself being cast outside the city of Jerusalem to die. “*And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.*” Matthew 21:39 “*And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.*” Mark 12:8 “*So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.*” Luke 20:15a

Luke is quite clear in his description of this for he uses the orist active participle of *ekballo*, to cast out, followed by the orist active indicative of *apokteino*, to kill. The action of the orist participle precedes the action of the main verb, so what we have is, “*having cast him out, they killed him*”. Which looks at the nation and leaders of Israel rejecting Jesus Christ, casting him out of the city of Jerusalem, and having him killed by crucifixion on the hill of Golgotha.

Both verbs, to *cast out* and to *kill*, are found in the active voice, which says that the subject produces the action of the verb, which shows that they produced the action of the verb. Even though it was the Roman authorities who literally killed Christ by nailing him to that cruel cross, it was the nation of Israel that was responsible for having it done! And we might interject that both verbs are used here, to *cast out* and to *kill*. You think that it would be enough to just cast him out of the city, but not for them, they had to kill him as well.

Christ continues on in his story and asks them what should the owner of the vineyard do to them? “*What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?*” Luke 20:15b And it's important that we recognize that Christ is speaking this parable to the **chief priests, scribes and the elders of Israel**. “*And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders,*” Luke 20:1 “*One day as he was teaching the people in the temple courts and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him.*” Luke 20:1 NIV

And the answer comes from all three passages, with the chief priests, scribes and elders replying in Matthew's account, “*They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.*” Matthew 21:41 While the Apostle Luke records it as, “*He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.*” Luke 20:16

Then the Lord goes on to explain what this means in that at one time as the Jews **were** the people and nation of God, that status was going to be taken away from them and given to another people and nation. “*Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits (the spiritual fruit) thereof.*” Matthew 21:43

The Apostle Peter is very clear in this matter stating that we, the Church, the Royal Family of God, are **now** the people of God. Israel once was, **but now we are!** “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were **not a people, but are now the people of God**: which had not obtained mercy, **but now** have obtained mercy.*” 1 Peter 2:9,10 The original has it as, *νυν δε λαος θεου, nun de laos theou, but now the people of God.*

And what's more **they knew** that he was talking about **them!** “*And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of **them**.*” Matthew 21:45 “*And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against **them**: and they left him, and went their way.*” Mark 12:12

Summary:

To summarize the story, there was a man who owned a large piece of property. His intention was to turn it into a major commercial vineyard operation that grew and processed the grapes on site. He went through a great deal of planning, on site improvements and personal expense out of his own pockets in setting the whole operation up.

Now **the man owned the vineyard**, and **the son of the man** was the one who was going to **inherit** it. The farmers? They didn't own it, but were merely tenant farmers on the land. The definition of a tenant is an occupant or inhabitant of any place, one that pays rent to use or occupy land, a building, or other property owned by another, a dweller in a place; an occupant. (Law) One who holds or possesses lands, or other real estate, by any kind of right, whether in fee simple, in common, in severalty, for life, for years, or at will; also, one who has the occupation or temporary possession of lands or tenements the title of which is in another.

Now because the man was busy at various other concepts going on in his life, he leased his vineyard and its operation out to certain farmers, tenant farmers, who were to work the vineyard and return back to him a certain percentage of the crop keeping the rest for themselves. Having done all that he went on a journey to a distant country.

When it came time for the harvest, the man sent his servants to the farmers to collect what was due him. But instead of giving back to the man what they owed, they beat some and killed others. Finally he sent his son because surely they would respect him. But instead of respecting him, they cast him out of the vineyard, which was his inheritance, and killed him!

After killing the owner's son and keeping the vineyard to themselves, they were now confronted with a new reality. What would they tell people about the land that they had been working and living on? A) would they tell the people the truth that it really wasn't their land, but some other man's land, and that they had killed his son so they could keep it? B) Or, would they keep it and lie and tell everyone else that it was theirs all along? And so the lie would be perpetuated from one generation to the next.

So the question was, what should the lord, the owner, of the vineyard do to those farmers? And the reply was that they should be destroyed and the vineyard be leased out to others! And those the Lord was talking to knew that he was talking about them and they knew that he wasn't talking about a literal vineyard, but the nation of Israel and who its rightful owner is!

Or another way of framing the question is, what do you think that the Father would do after hearing that these rogues had murdered his son, his only son?! He knew that he owned the property, and he knew that this land was his gift to his son – **not his son's murderers!** So what do you think that his attitude would be toward those who concocted this lie, perpetuated this lie, and, toward others who continued to believe and defend this lie?

To recap the legal history we need to see that because God created the earth and everything on it, he thereby owns the earth, everything on the earth and everything it produces! The land, the nations, the water, all the plant life, all the animal life, everything. **God holds the title to the earth.** *“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: **for all the earth is mine.**”* Exodus 19:5

When God created Adam and put him on the earth, he put him here to **possess** the earth, to rule the earth, to have dominion over it, enjoy it and develop it. **But he did not transfer the title of the earth over to him!** *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”* Genesis 1:26 Adam did not hold the **title** to the earth; his role was one only of possession and dominion over it.

When Adam listened to Lucifer in the garden and disobeyed God, he lost his rule over the earth, that is, his dominion over the earth was then transferred to Satan. Which Satan stated to the Lord. *“And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.”* Luke 4:6 Satan now became the earth's ruler exercising his dominion over it. Satan gained dominion over the earth, but never gain its title, because it was not Adam's to give! And why? Because God never gave him the title! And thank God for that!

God deposes one king and establishes another on his throne. He brings one people into a land driving out its former inhabitants. And if they too become wicked, then he will drive them out replacing them with another people. If a people become wicked, then he will have them ruled by wicked leaders. If a people turn to him and abide by his ways and his Word, then he will provide good leaders. Why? Because he owns the land and he has the right to decide who lives on it!

When God brought Israel into the land of Canaan to possess, there was a people already living on it, but they were a wicked people. So, because it was God's land and he is a righteous judge, he drove them from the land and brought in a new people that he wanted to live on his land. God could do this because he owns Egypt, Israel, Africa, Canada, America, he owns every bit of land called earth. And he alone has the right to determine who lives where. *“From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.”* Acts 17:26

Now when God gave the land to Israel, it was only in the sense of **possessing**; **he did not transfer the title to Israel!** Failure to understand this difference in real property law has caused many Christians to hold to a position that is anti Bible. They assume that when people make a statement, such as, *‘well God gave the land to Israel’*, to mean that Israel owned it! Which is not the case. He gave them the land to **possess** and that with many conditions placed on their continued **possession** of the land. God did transfer the title to the land of Israel, but only to one man, and that is to his son, **Jesus Christ!**

The religious and political establishment of Israel rejected Christ's legitimate claim to the throne of Israel; they rejected his legitimate claim to the land and nation of Israel; and they rejected his claim as the Coming One that God sent to the nation of Israel. *“The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:”* Mark 12:10

A building metaphor is used here to explain a theological point. Whenever temples or government buildings were erected, the construction material of choice was stone. Now in building a temple the masons would look at the various stones that were to be used and when they saw one they didn't like, one that didn't fit in with their plans for the building, then they would throw it over in the reject pile.

What this is saying is that the religious leaders of Israel were building their religion in the nation and Christ didn't fit in with it, so they cast him over to the reject pile. **But it is this same One that they rejected, that God used as the cornerstone of the temple he was building!**

God graciously brought Israel into his land to possess, to live on. And even in this, this was not a right of possession, but a privilege of possession. But over the years of continued rebellion against God, he finally took the ten northern tribes off his land in 722 BC through the Assyrian invasion and conquest, but graciously allowed Judah to remain on his land in the south.

But as time went by, they followed in the steps of their brothers to the north, and God had to remove them from his land through the Babylonian invasion and conquest of 586 BC. They were later brought back to his land to live on, and much later on, we come down to the Roman invasion and conquest of Israel where they were finally removed from the land in 70AD, all this as prophesied in the Gospels and by the Lord.

Many years went by again and then in 1948 the political state of Israel was formed by the United Nations. Since then millions of Christians and thousands of churches have been boldly proclaiming that the land belongs to Israel, that God gave them the land, that they own the land! Which, as we have seen from Scriptures and from the Lord's own mouth, is patently untrue! God gave them the land to live on, but he didn't give them the land to own! He owns the land and he gave it to his son, Jesus Christ!

The issue for Christians is not about a political state of Israel existing. The issue for us is what does the Bible teach about them in the matter of them owning the land? Did God give them the ownership of the land, or did he simply give them possession of the land to live on? Did God ever sign away his title to the land over to them? I think you will find that God never gave the title to the earth, nor any part of the earth, to Adam, to Satan, nor to Israel. But held the title all those years and gave it to Jesus Christ.

I know there will be many fine Christians that can't get away from the idea that Israel owns the land. They have heard this over and over from so many sources that it has been ingrained in their thinking. But I would leave you with this:

There is a difference between possession and ownership.

Only the owner can stipulate conditions concerning his land.

God never transferred the title of the land over to the people of Israel.

God never even transferred the title of the earth over to Adam.

Without title Israel did not **own** the land.

Israel only possessed the land and then lost possession of it, but they did not own it.

Possession was a privilege, not a right, based upon adhering to the conditions stated by God.

Christ himself stated that Israel's legal status regarding the land they were living on was that of lessees!

The granting of the land to the seed of Abraham was to the Seed, Jesus Christ, not racial Israel.

When Christ stated in his parable that the lessees murdered the heir, the father's son, and stole his land, he was talking about Israel at that time and it revealed that Israel did not own the land! What it did show, according to Jesus Christ, is that they were murderers and thieves. Christians who join in with others maintaining the position that Israel owns, or owned, the land, and try to justify it with Scripture, are not only misconstruing what the Bible so clearly teaches, but are taking a position that is contrary to the Father and the Son. They say, it's Israel's, but Christ says, it's his! They say it belongs to Israel, but Christ says it belongs to him!

So I guess it boils down to two positions. Are we going to take the side of those, who say that the land belongs to Israel, or are we going to take the side of Christ, who says that the land is his!