

# Matthew 21:45-46

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-21/matthew-2145-46/>

*The Sadducees and Pharisees have understood that Jesus was speaking against them. They desire to arrest Him for what He said. But they do not do so at this time, because they are afraid of how the many people who believe Jesus is a prophet will respond if they tried to seize Him.*

The parallel gospel accounts of this event are found in Mark 12:12 and Luke 20:19-20.

Matthew wrote *When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. The parables that He was speaking of were the parable of the two sons (Matthew 21:28-30) and the parable of the vine-growers (Matthew 21:33-41). Both parables were unflattering portraits of the chief priests and Pharisees.*

In addition to these *parables*, Jesus also explained their meaning to *the priests and the people* as He taught in the temple. This too was critical and exposing.

*Jesus said* the chief priests and Pharisees were like a hypocritical son who promised one thing to his father but did the opposite (Matthew 21:30). *They* were like hired vine-growers who killed the son of the vineyard-owner in order to steal his inheritance (Matthew 21:39-39). *They* were the builders who rejected the chief cornerstone of God's kingdom (Matthew 21:42). *They* were the ones this same stone falls on and will scatter like dust (Matthew 21:41).

*They understood that Jesus said* all these things about them.

*They also understood that Jesus said* how the despised sinners, such as tax collectors and prostitutes would enter God's kingdom before *they* would (Matthew 21:31). *They understood* how *Jesus said* that God would give their place of honor in the kingdom to these sinners (Matthew 21:44).

These things that *Jesus said about them* angered *them*. *They* wanted to arrest *Jesus* for saying these things *about them* in the temple. But *when the chief priests and the Pharisees sought to seize Him they* did not do so.

The reason *they* did not arrest *Jesus* was because *they feared the people* who considered *Him to be a prophet*. *The people* were amazed at *Jesus* and openly proclaimed *Him* as the Messiah (Mark 11:18; Matthew 21:15). If *they* arrested *Jesus* now, it would likely cause a riot in the temple. *The people* would take *His* side and be against *them*. The riot might even spill out into the city and cause the Roman officers to intervene. This would be a disaster for *the chief priests and Pharisees*. And so, they did not seize *Him* at this time.

Instead "they watched *Him*, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch *Him* in some statement, so that they could deliver *Him* to the rule and the authority of the governor" (Luke 20:20). By the phrase "deliver *Him* to the rule and authority of the

governor” Luke means that they intended to have him executed by crucifixion. The Jews had been delegated authority to judge most matters within Judea, but they were not allowed to issue capital punishment. Therefore, their strategy was to find or invent a premise by which they could get the Roman authorities to crucify Jesus.

### **Biblical Text**

**21:45-46 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet.**