



LESSON 19

Jesus teaches the parable of landowner

MARK 12:1-12



People who reject Jesus' authority will be destroyed.



"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone" (Mark 12:10).

Supporting Truths

1. People who do not let Jesus be in charge will be destroyed.
2. Jesus has authority from God because He is the Son of God.
3. Jesus has authority from God because He is the cornerstone chosen by God.
4. God expects the fruit of righteousness.
5. Jesus will win no matter what.

Objectives

1. Retell the parable of the vineyard.
2. Explain the authority of an heir.
3. Describe a cornerstone and define "providence."
4. Compare Mark 12:1-7 to Isaiah 5:1-7.
5. Explain how Jesus won through the resurrection.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Summary

The religious leaders questioned Jesus' authority. Yet because they were trying to trap Him, Jesus would not plainly tell them where His authority came from. Instead, He used the parable of the vineyard and the prophecy of the cornerstone to show them. Both of these proved that His authority came from God and that the religious leaders had no right to resist. Even so, they still rejected Him, and consequently they would be completely destroyed.

Spotlight on the Gospel

Every person faces the same choice as the religious leaders. Like the tenants in the parable, you can live for yourself, ignore God, and refuse to accept Jesus. But no matter how much you deny Him, you cannot defeat Him. Or you can let Jesus be in charge. You can build your life on Him as your strong foundation and put your hope in His risen life. As you do, you will live for God and enjoy the blessing of living in His kingdom.

LAST WEEK



Jesus enters Jerusalem
Luke 19:28-44

THIS WEEK



Jesus teaches the
parable of landowner
Mark 12:1-12

NEXT WEEK



Jesus teaches the
parable of the talents
Matthew 25:14-30

THE PASSION WEEK OF JESUS

Lesson Commentary

People who reject Jesus' authority will be destroyed.

Two days before this parable, Jesus had entered Jerusalem publicly as the promised King in order to provoke His enemies to kill Him. But instead of bowing before Him, the religious leaders questioned His **authority**, His *right to be in charge* (11:28). Because of their rebellion, they did not deserve an answer (11:29–33). Even so, Jesus used a parable and a prophecy to reveal His authority and to warn that everyone who rejects His authority will be utterly destroyed.

Jesus used a parable to condemn the religious leaders (12:1–9)

At first, the parable was ordinary and familiar to Jesus' hearers. They would have known the hard work involved in planting a vineyard (12:1). Vineyards were planted on rocky slopes. First, the rocks were moved and retaining walls built to create flat terraces where vines could be planted. Next, bedrock was carved out to make a winepress, where grapes would be stepped on with bare feet and the juice would flow downhill to be collected in storage jars. Finally, a stone wall and a watchtower protected the vineyard, since vineyards are valuable but also fragile. Then,

even after all this was done, the owner had to wait four or five years before the vines grew and produced the first good grape harvest. The vineyard owner had worked hard on this vineyard, and he

deserved to benefit from it.

Including tenants in the story was also not unusual. Most of the land at that time was owned by the wealthier class, who often lived elsewhere while the poorer class worked as tenant farmers. In return for their work, the farmers would keep most of the wine from the vineyard, while they would pay a portion of the wine to the owner as rent (12:2). As might be expected, there were sometimes squabbles between tenants and owners.

But the conflict in Jesus' parable is quite unusual. Instead of paying any rent, the tenants beat the first slave, bashed the second slave in the head, and killed the third slave (12:3–5). Strangely, the owner kept sending more slaves, but with the same results (12:5). Even more strange, the owner sent his son (12:6). The tenants, perhaps thinking that the owner had died or would never come back, decided to kill the son (12:7). If the heir died, and no owner came to claim the land, the land would belong to whoever was occupying it. In a final act of defiance, the tenants not only killed the son, but they dishonored him by throwing him out of the vineyard without a proper burial (12:8).

What does this parable mean? Jesus' description of the vineyard comes from Isaiah 5:1–7, which compares

Israel to a vineyard. God had chosen, rescued, guided, taught, protected, and cared for Israel, and He expected Israel to bear the fruit of righteousness. When they did not, God was patient and gracious like the vineyard owner, sending prophets over and over again to urge righteousness (Jer 7:25). But like the tenants, Israel's leaders persecuted and killed the prophets (Jer 26:20–23; 2 Chr 24:20–22; Mark 11:29–33). And now they were rejecting the "**beloved son**," Jesus (Mark 12:6; 1:11; 9:7), *the heir and therefore the true owner of Israel*.

The religious leaders understood Jesus' story. They were rightly indignant at the tenants (Matt 21:41), but when they realized this parable was about them, they did not repent (Luke 20:16). As a result, they would get exactly the same punishment they had called for: total destruction (Matt 21:41), a complete undoing of everything they stood for. Forty years later, in AD 70, the Romans destroyed Israel. Ever since then, there has been no temple or genealogical records. That means no sacrifices or

THINK ABOUT IT

Jesus' story took an unusual turn.



THINK ABOUT IT

Jesus began with a simple, familiar story.

THINK ABOUT IT

The religious leaders knew Jesus was condemning their actions, but they refused to repent, hardening their hearts in defiance.



STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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priesthood. Their system is gone. Now God's kingdom is entrusted not to Israel or its leaders, but to a new nation with faithful leaders (Matt 21:41; Mark 12:9), to the church and its apostles (1 Pet 2:9; Eph 2:20). Israel's enjoyment of the kingdom would have to wait (Luke 21:24), and those who rejected Jesus when He came would never enjoy it.

Jesus used a prophecy to prove the parable (12:10–12)

When the leaders reacted against the parable, Jesus rebuked them again: "Have you not read this Scripture?" (Mark 12:10). How could they not know this? As the leaders of Israel, knowing and teaching Scripture was their job! Jesus quoted from the same psalm the people used to praise Him when He entered Jerusalem two days before (cf. Ps 118:26; Mark 11:9; Ps 118:22). He was affirming that He really was the Messiah. He was also giving another word picture, a rejected stone that in the end became the **cornerstone**. This most likely refers to the corner foundation stone, the stone that bears the weight of the building and is the standard for making the rest of the building level and straight. While Jesus would be rejected and killed, He would rise from the dead and become the foundation and focus of God's kingdom.

The cornerstone is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing because it allows the rest of the building to be built. The church is built upon Jesus (Eph 2:20), and whoever trusts in Jesus has a firm foundation and will never be shaken (Isa 28:16). But a cornerstone is also a curse, because when people walk by a building without paying attention, it is the sharp corner that they are most likely to bump into (1 Pet 2:8). Also, a cornerstone must be very large and solid, without any cracks, so anything it falls on will be crushed and anything that falls on it will shatter (Luke 20:18). As the stone that crushes and causes stumbling, Jesus was both King (Dan 2:34, 44–45) and God (Isa 8:14–15). He was warning the religious leaders again: receive the blessing by building your

life upon Jesus, or suffer the curse by refusing to submit to His authority.

After reciting the prophecy of the cornerstone, Jesus kept quoting from Psalm 118 to show two things. First, Psalm 118:23 shows the Father's **providence**, His control and oversight in sending Jesus to be the cornerstone (Mark 12:11). Remember how the Pharisees demanded to know who gave Jesus authority (11:28)? Now Jesus has answered them twice. The parable showed that the Son came with the authority of God, the vineyard owner. And now the prophecy showed that the stone was the cornerstone based on the authority of the Lord.

Second, for Jesus to be rejected and yet become the focus of God's kingdom would be "marvelous in our eyes" (Ps 118:23b). Jesus' incredible teaching and miracles regularly caused people to be amazed (Mark 1:27; 2:12; 15:5). But more than that, His victory despite rejection would be stunning. Only a handful of people had ever come back to life, and all of these were raised by a prophet or by Jesus. But Jesus took back His own life by His own divine power (John 10:18). His victory over death is the most powerful miracle ever, the most stunning example of God's supernatural power. Ever since then, anyone who rejects Jesus must deny His resurrection, and anyone who accepts Jesus must believe that Jesus rose again and lives forever as King over all (1 Cor 15:3–4, 17).

You have a choice. You can submit to His authority, give Him the fruit of obedience that He deserves, build your life upon Him as your sure foundation, and marvel at Him as your greatest glory and treasure. If you do, you will have life in His life and enter the kingdom of God. Or, like the religious leaders (Mark 12:12), you can live by your own authority and refuse to honor Him as your King. If you do, you will be destroyed.

THINK ABOUT IT

Jesus is the cornerstone (Acts 4:10–12).



Lesson Outline

People who reject Jesus' authority will be destroyed.



AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE

Let Jesus be your boss because . . .

1. Jesus is the Son of God who owns the vineyard (12:1–7).
2. God destroys everyone who rejects Jesus (12:8–9, 12).
3. Jesus is the cornerstone (12:10).
4. God makes sure Jesus wins (12:11).



AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE

1. Jesus used a parable to condemn the religious leaders (12:1–9).
 - God created Israel and expected the fruit of righteousness (12:1).
 - Israel's leaders beat and killed God's prophets (12:2–5).
 - Israel's leaders would kill God's Son (12:6–8).
 - God would destroy Israel's leaders and entrust the kingdom to the church (12:9).
2. Jesus used a prophecy to prove the parable (12:10–12).
 - Jesus is the cornerstone—a blessing and a curse (12:10).
 - The Father sent Jesus and was in control (12:11).
 - The religious leaders planned to kill Jesus (12:12).





Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. What did the man make?**
A vineyard, with a wall, a winepress, and a watch tower.
- 2. What did the tenants (farmers who rent the land) do to the man's slaves?**
They beat and killed the slaves instead of paying the rent.
- 3. What did they do to the man's son?**
They killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.
- 4. What kind of stone is Jesus like?**
A cornerstone—the foundation, the corner that guides the rest of the walls.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. What did the vineyard represent?**
Israel (more specifically, the kingdom which God entrusted to Israel).
- 2. Who did the different people represent?**
The owner is God, the tenants are Israel's leaders, the slaves are the prophets, and the son is Jesus.
- 3. What did God expect from Israel?**
God owned and cared for Israel, so Israel should have lived for Him (produced the fruit of righteousness).
- 4. Why should the tenants have respected the son?**
The son of the owner is the heir. He is in charge of the vineyard.
- 5. What would God do to the leaders when they killed Jesus?**
He would use Rome to destroy them—and their whole religious system, including temple, sacrifices, and priesthood.
- 6. After the parable, how did Jesus prove He is the Messiah?**
Jesus quoted from the same psalm (Ps 118) the people used to praise Him when He entered Jerusalem two days before.
- 7. How was Jesus like the stone rejected by the builders?**
Jesus would be rejected and killed, but He would rise from the dead and become the foundation and focus of God's kingdom.
- 8. How is the cornerstone both a blessing and a curse?**
It is a blessing because it allows the rest of the building to be built. It is a curse because people stumble over it. A cornerstone is also very large and solid, so anything it falls on will be crushed and anything that falls on it will shatter.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

WHAT IS A CORNERSTONE?

The cornerstone is the most important stone in the building—it holds the whole building together. Build walls out of blocks to show the importance of the cornerstone. If you take out that one block, the whole structure falls.

DO NOT JUDGE A TREAT BY ITS WRAPPER

Bring a number of different containers to class, each with a treat in it. Have some containers which look like they contain something very special and others which appear very undesirable. Put the best treats inside the ugliest containers. Select a few children to come and choose a treat for themselves and then reveal that the best treats were actually inside the worst looking containers. The people in Jesus' day were just like us. They rejected the best blessing that God had for them simply because it did not look like they expected. Does anybody know what that blessing was? Listen and we will find out in today's lesson.



ILLUSTRATE

VINE WALL DÉCOR

Create the scene where this parable may have taken place. Use butcher paper and markers to create large stone walls. Allow the children to decorate this mural with paper leaves, grape vines, and grapes. Create a tower and a winepress out of cardboard where children can stomp "grapes." Finally, allow the children to taste some grapes or grape juice.

STORY TIME

Tell the parable and at the end ask the children the same question Jesus asked: "What will the owner do?" See how they answer, then go on to explain what it means. Note: Depending on the age of your children, it might help to teach the principle of the parable before the parable. This may help younger children connect the parable with the truth that Jesus was teaching.



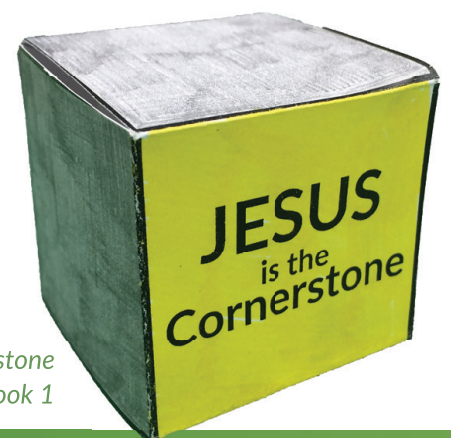
APPLY

JESUS IS THE CORNERSTONE

See *Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1*.

Materials: Craft sheet, cardstock, crayons, glue stick, scissors.

Directions: Photocopy the craft page on cardstock. Color every side of the cube, and use a different color for the side "Jesus is the Cornerstone". The cut it and glue it.



Jesus Is the Cornerstone
See *Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1*

TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

WARNING—DANGER

Show the class pictures of a number of different warning signs: beware of dog, yield, beware of falling rocks, high waves, sharks, electric shock, wet floors, keep out/no trespassing, etc. Talk about the purpose of warning signs and the consequence of ignoring them. In today's lesson, we're going to see two ways Jesus warned the religious leaders about the danger of rejecting His authority. Do you think they listened to Jesus' warning? We will find out in today's lesson.

THE STONE THE BUILDERS REJECTED

Using blocks or small boxes, build a tall structure. Count out enough blocks so that there are as many blocks as there are children, with one block extra. Tell the children that each child can only pick out one block before the building begins. After the children finish picking their blocks, point to the one rejected block and write "Cornerstone" on the side. Begin building with that block. Have the children bring their blocks to you one by one and build around the cornerstone block. Demonstrate how if you take out the cornerstone the whole structure falls. In today's lesson, we're going to learn how the stone the builders rejected—Jesus—became the cornerstone.



ILLUSTRATE

CORNERSTONES

Bring in some pictures of buildings with easily identifiable cornerstones. Point out that some cornerstones are painted a different color or constructed out of a different material to make them easy to identify. Some even contain words or the date of the building's construction. Does your church building have a visible cornerstone? If so, take the class out to examine it.

JENGA

During a game of Jenga, players take turns removing one wooden block at a time from a tower made of 54 blocks. After each block is removed, it is carefully placed on top of the tower. The goal is to continue to remove blocks and stack them on top without the tower falling over. With a tower of Jenga blocks in front of you, ask the children which blocks would be the easiest to remove without tipping over the tower. What about the one on the bottom in the corner, the cornerstone? That would be the worst block to remove first, for all the other blocks rest on it. It is the cornerstone, the most important piece.



APPLY

ISRAEL REJECTS GOD

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, cardstock, crayons, glue stick, scissors.

Directions: Photocopy the craft page on cardstock. Color every image with crayons, and cut it. Glue every image in the right order on the page "Israel Rejects God."

Israel Rejects God
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 1



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

THE PROPHETS OF GOD

In the parable of the landowner, the servants who are killed represent the prophets God sent to Israel. Prepare the children to hear the lesson by reminding them of the prophets God sent to Israel. Use previous lessons and pictures to review the ministry of Moses and Elijah. Review how Moses and Elijah called the people of Israel to obedience and repentance but how the people of Israel typically rejected God's prophets. End by talking about John the Baptist, the prophet the children will most likely recall.

IMPORTANCE OF CORNERSTONE

Stack Styrofoam cups into a shape of a pyramid. Tell one child at a time to try to pull one of the corner cups out from the structure without knocking over the pyramid. After great difficulty and after many times restacking the cups, it should be apparent that the game is impossible. Use this opportunity to talk about the importance of a cornerstone within a building. All the walls lean upon or rest against a cornerstone. If this cornerstone is removed, the building collapses. In today's lesson, Jesus is spoken of as being the cornerstone.



ILLUSTRATE

CRUSHED OR CRACKED

A cornerstone is large and solid. Anything it falls on will be crushed and anything that falls on it will shatter (Luke 20:18). Demonstrate this to the children with two bricks, some hard candy, and a five-gallon bucket. Demonstrate what happens to the hard candy when it falls on the brick. Now show the children what happens when the brick falls on the hard candy (do this inside the bucket). This saying reveals that both hostility and indifference are wrong responses to Christ. They are both worthy of judgment.

PASSED OVER

Share the story of someone who was passed over for a position because they were thought to be too slow, too young, too short, etc. However, over time this person was able to rise to the highest level in their field, proving all the critics wrong. Connect this story to today's lesson: Jesus, the One rejected by the religious leaders (the so-called experts), became the cornerstone (the centerpiece of God's kingdom).



APPLY

THE RIGHT RESPONSE

Both David and the Pharisees were drawn in by a parable that ended up exposing their own sin (2 Sam 12:1–12). But while the Pharisees still refused to repent (Mark 12:12), centuries earlier David had humbled himself before God, confessing his sin (2 Sam 12:13). David has left us a pattern to follow. David confessed that he had sinned “against the LORD,” and God graciously forgave him. May we, like David, humble ourselves before God and cry out to Him for forgiveness. He graciously hears and forgiveness all those confess their sin (1 John 1:7).