

# Cornerstone

Luke 20:9-19

April 18, 2021



This week's lesson centers around a very timely parable told by Jesus just days before His crucifixion. For context, it's important to see what had just happened prior to the telling of this parable. [Lk 20:1-2](#) tells us about a dialogue that had just happened between Jesus and the Jewish religious

leaders. It had to do with authority. Let's see how Jesus answers their question with this parable.

**Verse 20:9** — **“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.”** The religious leaders, who were part of Jesus' audience here, must have immediately picked up on the vineyard theme and remembered the numerous places in the Old Testament describing God's covenant people as a vine or a vineyard. For example, please see [Ps 80:8-10](#), [Is 5:1-7](#), [Jer 2:21](#), and [Hos 10:1](#). In all but one of these cases, what God intended the vineyard to become and produce did not materialize. This was due to their disobedience. They didn't render to God the fruit He was due. Isaiah's account even referred to them as *wild grapes*, though God had planted them as a *choice vine*. It's likely the religious leaders in Jesus' audience could tell who Jesus was talking about with first sentence of this parable. Commenting on this verse, theologian *Charles Ellicott* says, *“The owner ‘let it out, and went into another country for a long time.’ That is a picturesque way of saying that we have apparent possession, and are left free to act, God not being manifestly close to us. He stands off, as it were, from the creatures whom He has made, and gives them room to do as they will. But all our possessions, as well as the revelation of Himself in Christ, are only let to us, and we have rent to pay.”*



**Verses 10-12** — **“<sup>10</sup>And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. <sup>11</sup>And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. <sup>12</sup>And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out.”** The phrase, **“At the season”** refers to harvest time. In these verses, we see a succession of three separate attempts to gather the fruit the landowner rightfully expected to receive. Each time, the landowner sent one of his servants. The meaning of the quantity of *three* servants used in these verses is believed by some scholars to indicate the fulness of time ([see Gal 4:4-7](#)). Biblically, the number three is symbolic of completeness. The *servants* here represent the many prophets God sent to His Covenant people over many centuries. In the parable, each servant was badly treated and sent away empty.

**WHO'S IN CHARGE?**

**Verse 13** — **“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.”** The KJV refers to the owner of the vineyard as *lord of the vineyard*. As pointed out in our quarterly on [page 74](#), the original Greek word used here, *Kyrios*, can be translated as *Lord*. Our quarterly goes on to say that, *“Jesus' use of this term in the parable was probably intended to associate the vineyard owner with God the Father.”* In the parable, the lord of the vineyard asked, **“What shall I do?”** The *Pulpit Commentary* on this question is as follows: *“The deliberative words, ‘What shall I do?’ recall the Divine dialogue alluded to in [Gen 1:26](#).”* The answer is then given, **“I will send my beloved son: it may be that they will reverence him when they see him.”** After patiently sending servant after servant to no avail, the vineyard owner went to the greatest extremity of all and sent his *beloved son*. Upon hearing the reference of the landowner's beloved son, the religious leaders in Jesus' audience were very likely steaming on the inside, wondering how they could get their hands on Him. The next verse would confirm their desire to kill Him.



**Verse 14** — **“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.”** Upon the arrival of the landowner's son, the wicked tenants in the parable recognized he was the heir. They consulted among themselves to kill him and seize upon the inheritance. How they thought they could do so with the landowner still living has been debated among Bible scholars. On [page 75](#), our quarterly says, *“Perhaps the best we can say is that those who are controlled by evil intentions often do not think straight. They are guided more by*

impulse rather than honesty or logic.”

**Verse 15a** — “**So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him**”. The first part of this verse foreshadows the anguish and death the *Man of sorrows* ([Is 53:3](#)) was to experience in just a few days. Now the question, **verse 15b**, “**what therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?**” It appears Jesus was asking this question rhetorically as far as the crowd goes. The veil between the implicit and the explicit is becoming thinner and thinner. He knew that it wasn’t his listener’s judgment to make anyway, so He answers it. After all, it was already decided by the determinate council of God.

**Verse 16a** — “**He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others**”. In their thinking, the tenants thought the landowner would never come. To their horror, they find out they were wrong. It was certainly right for them to be so judged for not rendering the fruit that was due, their mishandling of the servants who were sent, and the murder of the heir. Concerning the giving of the vineyard to *others*, Jesus did not disclose who the *others* were. In His teachings before, He alluded to the Gentiles having access to the benevolent goodness of God (e.g. [Lk 4:24-29](#)). Also in the instance of this parable, they would have none of it. They bristled at the very thought of it.

**Verse 16b** — “**And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.**” Our quarterly puts it very well on page 77. It says, “*The implications of the owner’s replacement of the wicked tenants with others was obvious to those who grasped the meaning of Jesus’ parable. They knew that Jesus was predicting a loss of the kingdom by the unbelieving Jewish leadership and replacement with others that included Gentiles.*” The phrase *those in the crowd* used, *God forbid*, is emphatic in the original Greek. Now, Jesus shifts the attention to [Ps 118:22](#).

**Verse 17** — “**And he beheld them and said, What is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?**” The Greek verb for *beheld* has the connotation of looking intently, to give impressiveness to what He is going to say in reply, according to the *Expositor’s Greek Testament*. With great courage, Jesus states acknowledgement of His rejection as Messiah by the Jewish religious leaders. For other references in the Bible where Jesus is likened to a stone or a rock, please see [Dan 2:45](#), [1 Cor 10:4](#), [1 Pet 2:8](#).

**Verse 18** — “**Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder.**” In this amazing time in history, God in Person...as God the Son, walked among them, and they did not recognize Him. They couldn’t turn loose of their pride, their “authority”. As touching the two types of people Jesus speaks of in this verse and their fate with respect to the cornerstone, various Bible Scholars interpret the former differently. Some believe those who *fall upon the cornerstone* **and** those *on whom the cornerstone falls* are both judged to their damnation. Others believe those who *fall on the cornerstone* and are broken represent a brokenness that comes from repentance and a breaking away from pride, rebellion, and self-will. This interpretation hearkens to [Ps 51:17](#) which says, “**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.**” As far as my research shows, Bible scholars are agreed that those who will be crushed by the **Cornerstone** are those who persist in showing hostility toward God’s rule, signified by their rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. There’s no remedy for them.



**Verse 19** — “**And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them**”. This parable did not deter the religious leaders intention to kill Jesus. It illuminated it in full color.

## Broader Applications

1. What does this parable tell us about God?

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2. What does this parable tell us about Jesus?

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3. What kinds of fruit did God expect from Israel?

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4. Does God expect believers to be fruitful today? \_\_\_\_\_

What are some of the kinds of fruit?

5. \_\_\_\_\_

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