

**Exegetical Notes, Mark 12:1-12**  
***“The Problem with Tenants”***

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**Mark 12:1-12**

**Verse 1**

***He then began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard out to some farmers and went away on a journey.”***

- A parable is a short story drawn from everyday life. Its purpose is to teach a simple truth. In Jesus’ day parables were a commonly used teaching tool. To make his message simple and clear, Jesus began to use parables to teach the religious leaders of Israel.
- The first such story Jesus told was about a man who planted a vineyard and then leased the vineyard to some tenants. At his own expense, the man had planted, prepared, and secured the vineyard. Having leased it out to be tended by others, he went on a long trip.

**Verse 2-3**

***“At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed.”***

- When the time came to harvest the grapes, the owner of the vineyard sent a servant to collect the rent that was owed him by the tenants. Apparently, the rent was to be a percentage of the fruit harvested from the vineyard.
- But the tenants refused to honor the agreement they had reached. They would not pay the agreed to rent. Instead they beat up the servant sent to collect the rent and sent him back to the owner.

**Verse 4**

***“Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully.”***

- The owner tried to collect the rent again, sending another servant to the tenants. This second servant was beaten and abused and sent back to the owner empty-handed. The tenants still refused to honor their agreement with the owner. They would not pay the agreed to rent.

### **Verse 5**

***“He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.”***

- The owner tried repeatedly and persistently to collect the rent from the tenants. However, they stubbornly refused to pay what was due and continued to abuse, even to murder, the servants the owner sent to them.

### **Verse 6**

***“He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’”***

- At last, the owner sent his own son to collect the rent from the tenants, reasoning that the tenants would certainly honor his son

### **Verse 7-8**

***“But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.”***

- These tenants are truly evil persons. They clearly understand that the vineyard belongs to the owner and not to them, for when his son comes they see an opportunity to take what they know belongs to the father and will one day belong to the son. So they kill the son to steal his inheritance.

### **Verse 9-11**

***“What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. Haven’t you read this scripture:***

***‘The stone the builders rejected  
has become the capstone;  
the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”***

- Having carefully laid out the details of the story, Jesus now brings it home. He asks the crucial question... “What should happen to such evil tenants. Everyone knew the answer. They should be killed

- because of their evil deeds. Jesus explained to them that the tenants would get exactly what they deserved.
- Then Jesus quoted a passage of scripture from the Old Testament, Psalm 118:22-23. The point of the story was that Israel's leaders were acting like the tenants in the vineyard. They were refusing to honor its owner and were about to crucify his son.

### **Verse 12**

***Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.***

- The point Jesus was trying to make was made. They knew what he was trying to tell them. However, they did not agree with him. They would have arrested him and killed him right then, just as had the tenants done to the owner's son in the parable. The only thing that held them back was their fear of the crowd.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Problem With Tenants*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen*. They are used here by permission.)