Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Rejected Cornerstone
Scripture: Mark 12:1-12
Code: 41-60

There have always been critics who said that Jesus was a noble teacher, He was a religious leader and He was a spiritual man. He had grandiose ideas of what He wanted to accomplish. He wanted to teach people true religion. He wanted to teach people morality and virtue. He made a noble effort at it but it all kind of went bad. It all ended up in a terrible tragedy. He got caught in the gears of His own ambition and He ended up dead and the critics have often said this was not the plan, it was a tragic ending to a noble effort.

Well, of course, nothing could be further from the truth than that Jesus was surprised by His death. Jesus was not surprised by His death, He came for that purpose. The murder of Jesus came as no surprise to Him. The cross was the very reason for which He came. Scripture says He was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, and, believe me, from before the foundation of the world, the eternal Son knew exactly why He was coming into the world. And even Jesus the man in the world understood that the purpose of His incarnation was His death and resurrection.

So He lived in the perfect understanding of the inevitability of the cross. And in the days prior to His death, the weeks and months prior to His death, He spoke often about what was coming. Contrary to being a surprise, He knew the details before the people who carried them out even knew the details.

For example, in Mark 8:31 He began to teach His followers that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes...that would compose the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of Israel, and be killed and after three days rise again. And He was stating the matter plainly. There was absolutely no mistaking the fact that He knew about His coming death and He knew about its details.

Verse 9, as they were coming down the mountain, gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man rose from the dead. So He knows He’s going to die, He knows He is going to rise.

Verse 31 of that same chapter again, this time He’s in Galilee and He’s teaching His disciples. He says, “The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill Him and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.”

Again in chapter 10, verse 32, they were on the road, now going to Jerusalem. Jesus walking ahead of them, He took the Twelve aside at the end of the verse there, and then verse 33 He said to them, “Behold, we’re going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes. They will condemn Him to death, hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him and scourge Him and kill Him and three days later He will rise again.” Neither the Jewish leaders nor the Roman executioners knew that any of this was going to happen the way He said it was going to happen, but it was all prewritten history. He knew what was going to happen, how it was going to happen. He knew when it was going to happen. We have to go to Jerusalem for the Passover, that’s when it’s going to happen. And He knew the purpose of it. In the 45th verse of that tenth chapter, He said, “The Son of Man didn’t come to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many.”

He would die not a solo death of a disappointed man, but He would die a death that was a ransom to God for many. He understood the substitutionary reality of His death. He knew He would die. He knew the circumstances around that death, engaged the Jews and the Jewish leadership. It also engaged the Roman executioners and the purpose of God was ransom for those whom God had chosen.

So, as we approach the text in chapter 12, Jesus tells a parable. He fabricates it. He makes stories up. That’s what the parables are. He invents these stories, stories that would be easily understood by everybody listening to them, to explain spiritual realities and divine purposes.

It is Wednesday of Passion Week, it is Wednesday. He has entered into the city on Monday and is very popular, very, very popular. Massives of humanity numbering in the hundreds of thousands have come out on that Monday and hailed Him as their Messiah. We remember that. His popularity is huge.

On Tuesday there is a display not so much of His popularity, although that continued into Tuesday, but His power. He has amazing presence and power because He goes into the temple, you remember, and He just wipes out the criminal businesses that were conducted there by the priests. He has great power, that power has been on display. He has great popularity, that popularity has been on display. Maybe at this point, maybe at this point if He were just a normal man, He would be saying, “This thing couldn’t be going any better than it’s going right now. They run from Me when I threaten them and they run to Me when I welcome them. I have control over people, I can draw them to Me, I can chase them away.”

This is immense power that He exhibits. And yet in the face of such popularity and such power, He knows that in two days He will be on a cross. He knows that. Here we find Him, as we come to

chapter 12, in the temple area. For at least a day or so it is vacated by the corrupt businesses. For at least a little while it's a God-honoring place, as long as it is filled with His presence and His preaching.

The leaders of Israel hate Him. They hate Him for His popularity because they see His ascendency as diminishing their popularity and consequently their influence and power and prestige. But they hate Him doubly because of what He's done to their businesses. The indirect attack by a greater competing popularity and the direct attack by coming into the temple and wreaking havoc on their operation has caused them to want Him dead more than ever. They've been wanting Him dead for a long time, throughout the duration of His ministry basically since He did this before the beginning of His ministry when He came into the temple and made a whip and threw them out. They've wanted Him dead for three years, but now more than ever.

At this particular point, their desire for His death and His understanding of His coming death come together in a story. This is a dramatic story. It is a story that will suck them in. It will pull them in until they indict themselves and they'll actually realize they've done that. It's an unforgettable story, it's an unmistakable story that points to the evil murderous intent of the leaders of Israel and it also points to the death of Christ. He knows that both are a reality.

Let me read the story to you. Verse 1, "He began to speak to them in parables. A man planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a vat under the wine press and built a tower and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. At the harvest time, he sent a slave to the vine-growers in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. They took him and beat him and sent him away empty handed. Again he sent them another slave and they wounded him in the head and treated him shamefully. He sent another one and that one they killed. And so with many others, beating some and killing others. He had one more to send, a beloved son. He sent him last of all to them saying they will respect my son. But those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir, come let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours.' They took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others."

This story is also recorded in Matthew chapter 21 verses 33 and following and in Luke chapter 21 verses 9 and following. You notice that it begins by saying he began to speak to them in parables. That is true. Matthew gives us three parables that he used, Mark only records the main one and that's this one. The story is designed to escalate their hostility toward the tenant farmers. The story is designed to escalate the hearing audience anger at the tenant farmers for what they had done. It's a horrific kind of behavior.

Certainly the religious leaders of Israel couldn't tolerate something like this. They were legalists to the bone. They would want to rise up and say, "I've kept the Law perfectly, or as perfectly as possible." They wanted to keep the Law on the outside even if they couldn't keep it on the inside, as the Sermon

on the Mount indicates. They were religious legalists. The rest of the crowd, after all, were in the temple area. They were there for Passover. They were worshiping. They would have been to one degree or another good people on the level of human goodness, nothing more than that. So they would have been outraged at this kind of murderous behavior. Now that's the whole point. Jesus wants to insight outrage at the behavior of these tenant farmers.

The drama unfolds in such a way that you can't escape getting drawn in to the horror of this behavior. They prided themselves on their devotion to the temple, the people and the leaders. They prided themselves on their devotion to the Law. They prided themselves on their kindness and their goodness. And, of course, in order to maintain their self-image, they would need to be outraged at such wickedness to a man who was generous and patient and to slaves who were just doing their duty.

Let's look at the parable then.

"A man planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a vat under the wine press and built a tower." In your Bible you might notice that that is a quote from the Old Testament. That is a quote from Isaiah, that's a quote from Isaiah 5:1 and 2. Why does our Lord quote Isaiah 5:1 and 2? There are two reasons. Because that would be a very familiar text to the listeners, a very familiar one, turn to it, if you will.

In Isaiah 5, the prophet Isaiah gives this same kind of analogy about the planting of a vineyard. And in the words of verse 2, he says, "This vineyard...mentioned at the end of verse 1...is placed on a fertile hill, but in order to guarantee its success, he did all the things you're supposed to do, dug it all around and removed its stones.

On the flat lands of Israel, this is how they work their land. On the flat lands of Israel was the grain, and on the slopes were the vineyards. And slopes are filled with rocks, one old rabbi said in print many centuries ago, that when God distributed the rocks around the world, He dumped most of them in Israel. And there's some truth in that. And so when they were getting their land ready to put the vineyards on the slopes, they would terrace them, they'd have to pull the rocks out, they would make the terrace walls by pulling out the rocks. And that's what they would do. Planted the choicest vine, good...good plant, built a tower in the middle of it, hewed out a wine vat. In other words, this is what you did to produce a good vineyard. You did all of this. It all made sense. You found the good land, you removed the stones, you built a protection around it, digging all around it could be for a wall around it or even a moat around to protect it from animals encroaching on it. And you did all these things and you would expect, at the end of verse 2, that it would produce good grapes.

But this one in Isaiah 5 produced only "boohoo sheem," that's a Hebrew word for sour berries not edible. This person who planted this...this vineyard expected a good product because he did

everything. There would be nothing more to do. And all he got was sour berries.

Now what's this about? Go to verse 7, Isaiah 5:7, "The vineyard of the Lord..." now we know who the planter is, who is it? It's the Lord, is the house of Israel, the men of Judah, His delightful plan. God planted Israel and He expected good grapes. Verse 7 says He looked for justice. He looked for righteousness. That's what that word is. He looked for righteousness but all He saw was bloodshed. That's a play on words. He looked for *mish pack*, all He saw was *mish pah*. He looked for righteousness and saw bloodshed for righteousness and all there was was distress.

Why does the Lord use that Isaiah passage here? Because He's pointing out one very important issue. The vineyard here is the vineyard of the Lord, and again it is Israel...it is Israel. That's why He borrows that picture from Isaiah 5.

So now we have one interpretive key here, the Lord is the one who plants the vineyard and Israel is that vineyard, that plant.

Notice in verse 1, everything was done that should have been done, a wall, a protection around it, a vat under the winepress, the winepress where the grapes were crushed and the juice would then flow into the vat. A tower, that was used for the workers to find shade and shelter, that was used as a tower to look and see if anybody was encroaching upon the vineyard to do harm, which enemies did in ancient times and also as a place to store the tools and implements they used. Everything was done to make success out of the vineyard.

Now in Isaiah's case, what happened? Israel defected, brought forth sour berries. This is a symbol of their apostasy. They were characterized by immorality, injustice and the rest of chapter 5, by the way in Isaiah, lays out their sins and they are gross sins. There's one woe after another...woe, woe, woe, which is a pronunciation of damnation on that vineyard, Israel, because Israel was unfaithful to God. So here you have again, the history of Israel being written the same way in this parable.

Well, once this was prepared, this absentee owner rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey...a long journey we are told in one of the other gospels...a long journey, he's gone a long, long time. He rents it out to contract tenant farmers. That was done very often, it's done today. Not everybody farming the land owns the land they farm. Tenant farmers make a contract and they go in under that contract and they share the proceeds of the harvest. That's exactly what was done in ancient times all over agrarian places. They would do the work and they would keep whatever they agreed upon the percentage of the crop was, and the rest would be owed to the absentee land owner who at the appropriate time would come to receive his percentage.

At the harvest time...and by the way, it usually took from the time a vineyard was first planted five years to come to that harvest time. So it's been a long journey, for sure. At the harvest time he sent a

slave to the vine-growers for the purpose of receiving some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers, his percentage of the crop. This is to be expected. The authorized representative comes from the man to collect the contracted amount that is due to him and now the shocks begin to come.

Verse 3, “They took him and beat him, literally *darrow,* they punched him. It was a serious beating. They struck him, hit him and sent him away empty handed.” This is an unacceptable kind of conduct to us, of course, but to the people listening, this is just...this is just outrageous conduct. This is ingratitude. They’re going to be paid for their work. They’re going to get to keep the greatest portion because they’ve done the work. This is ingratitude, this is open rebellion, this is wickedness.

Well, verse 4 says, “Again he sent them another slave and they wounded him in the head.” Literally, they bashed his head in, and they treated him shamefully. We don’t know what that was but it’s a verb that means to insult.

Verse 5, he sent another. And by this time, the people are saying, “Wait a minute, here. Is that a good thing to do? You had one of them that was beaten severely and you had the next one who has his head bashed in. You sure you want to send another one?

He sent another one, verse 5, and that one they killed. It escalates...they killed. Matthew 21:35 says, “Jesus actually said they stoned him to death.” They picked up some of the rocks from the terraces and stoned him to death. And then it says in verse 5, “And so with many others, beating some and killing others.” Just kept sending them with the same results. This is bizarre behavior. This is bizarre behavior on the part of the vine-growers, but this is also bizarre behavior on the part of the owner. The people must be saying, “Whoa, whoa, whoa, enough is enough. You don’t send another one, you send an army and use exact retribution. This is enough.”

And then the story really gets amazing. Verse 6 , he had one more to send. He’s exhausted all of his slaves. He’s got one more...a beloved Son.

And at this point, people are saying, “Oy vey, not going to send his son?” Some gasps in the crowd

This is the heir. This is the first-born son, this is the most precious one in the house. But he sent him last of all to them, saying, “They’ll respect my son.”

Verse 7, “Those vine-growers said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and the inheritance will be ours.’”

Jesus loved to put these shocking aspects into His stories...shocking, inexplicable, unexpected, unacceptable, even foolish it seems. The crowd would be expecting that rather then send the son, he

would pull together a force and go back and exact justice with government backing and bring about the death of those murderers who brutalized and killed his slaves. And a slaughter would be just. Justice, by the way, long delayed. But now, he sends his son and with no hesitation they kill him and they wouldn't even give him a burial, they just threw him out of the vineyard to be consumed by the scavengers. Nobody left to send. All the possible options exhausted.

Then comes the question in verse 9, "What will the owner of the vineyard do?" Boy, what a provocative question...what will the owner of the vineyard do?

Well if he exacted Old Testament law, it would be capital punishment to all of them, right? Genesis 9:6, "Capital punishment for all of them." What will the owner of the vineyard do?

At that point, Matthew's account tells us that the people shouted an answer. "They said to him...Matthew 21:41...'Bring those wretches to a wretched end.'" Oh, he's got them hooked, hasn't he? They're giving him back the right answer. Bring those wretches to a wretched end. They even double use a severe word. "Yeah," you can just hear it going through the crowd, "that's what he...that's what he's got to do."

And then, according to Matthew 21:41, "They also said, 'And he will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper season.'"

They got the right ending, and that's what Mark says, "They'll come and destroy the vine-growers and give the vineyard to others." Jesus is affirming what the crowd said. The crowd gave him the answer, as recorded in Matthew 21, and Jesus affirms it as recorded in Mark 12.

But at that point, something interesting is happening, because Luke 20 verse 16, in Luke's account, says, "When they heard it they said, 'May it never be. May it never be.'"

Why would they say that? *Me Gennita*, the strongest negative in the Greek language. May it never happen.

I think I know why they said that, because of verse 12. They were seeking to seize Him, the leaders, and yet they feared the people for they understood that He spoke the parable against...what?..them. They were starting to make sense out of this thing. No, no, no, no, no, no, may it never be.

So we get a hint at what's coming here. They've been sucked in, they have now taken the side of the owner against the tenant farmers, which means they've taken the side of God against themselves.

Well, that's the parable, let's look at the interpretation, okay?

“A man planted a vineyard,” who’s the planter? God, the originator, possessor of the vineyard. What’s the vineyard? Israel, from Isaiah 5, that’s so important, that’s a key interpretating principle, interpreting principle, and that’s why you have the language of this opening verse borrowed from the second verse of Isaiah 5. Who are the vine-growers? The *georgos*, they are the religious leaders. They are the religious leaders, those who are given care over Israel, those who were to tend God’s people, the stewards of God’s possession. They are wretched, according to Jesus’ words this same week in Matthew 23, they are hypocrites, hypocrites, hypocrites. They are called sons of hell. But they were the religious leaders, the Sanhedrin, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, all of them.

What is this journey? This is a period of Old Testament history, a history of Old Testament history. Through the history of Israel, God has planted His people from Abraham on, and He has placed over them priests, a priestly line. He has given them His Law. He has brought people to the study of that Law, scribes for the purpose of teaching that Law, for the purpose of distributing to them His own revelation and His own will and bringing them to true worship. These leaders have the responsibility before God to give the truth to His people.

Harvest time, what’s that? That’s the season when God comes to expect the spiritual fruit. God expects because of what He’s given, the truth, the Law, the Scriptures, the Old Testament to Israel, and He’s placed over them those who study the Law, like Ezra, who set that whole thing in motion, who are responsible to disseminate the truth of God to the people and bring them to a place of true worship. However, when the time comes for God to look at His people and assess the situation, it is a serious situation indeed. When God comes to expect spiritual fruit, something good, He finds His people repeatedly throughout the Old Testament and even in this hour that we see here, unfaithful to Him. It’s always sour berries, if we can borrow from Isaiah.

Who are the slaves that He sends? The Old Testament prophets, the Old Testament prophets. God sent one after another after another after another to Israel to bring to the nation a reminder of His demands and an indictment of their sin. The prophets came. The prophets denounced the sin and called for repentance and righteousness, right? That’s what they all did. To call the nation to produce the fruit for /God’s honor and God’s glory, to give God the harvest due Him, to call the people to holiness and righteousness and true repentance and faith in Him, all the prophets from Moses to John the Baptist...Moses being the first, John the Baptist being the last.

And what did Israel do with the prophets? They rejected them. They mistreated them. They beat them, wounded them, heaped shame on them, threw them out and murdered them. That’s what they did. That’s their history. The history of Israel is filled with the mistreatment of God’s prophets. Justin Martyr in his dialogue with Tripho accuses the Jews of sawing Isaiah in half with a wooden saw. There’s a reference to the sawing in half of a faithful man in Hebrews 11:37, very likely Isaiah, faithful

prophet, and they sawed him in half. Jeremiah constantly mistreated, thrown into a pit, you can read that in Jeremiah. And tradition says that in the end Jeremiah was also stoned to death. So when Jesus described them stoning the slaves that came, they might well remember the stoning of Jeremiah.

Ezekiel faced exactly the same hatred. Amos had to flee for his life. Zachariah was rejected and according to 2 Chronicles 24, he also was stoned. Micah was beaten in the face, according to 1 Kings 22. This is a uniform hostility directed at the prophets. The amount of hostility varied, expressed itself in different ways, but on a whole, it increased, it escalated...it escalated, it escalated all the way down to John the Baptist and even he had his head chopped off.

I'll spare you reading in Jeremiah 7 and Jeremiah 25 about the horrible treatment of the prophets. You can read for yourself Matthew 23 in which Jesus specifically addresses this, but I think it might be worth me reading that portion of Scripture, rather than several others because it's all kind of wrapped up here.

In the twenty-third chapter is the sermon given right at this time in Passion Week, our Lord says in verse 29 of Matthew 23, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous." They would go around building tombs as monuments to the prophets of the past. This is such hypocrisy. Cause he says, "You say if we had been living in the days of our fathers, we wouldn't have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets." They knew they killed the prophets, that was their history. They all knew that. And so here they are building monuments to the prophets in Jesus' time and saying, "We would never have done that to the prophets, we honor the prophets. So we've gone back to wherever they're buried and we've build monuments to them. Jesus says, "So you testify against yourself, you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers."

Why does He say that? Because He knows what they're going to do to Him. He knows what they're planning to do to Him. He knows their thoughts about Him. "Who are you kidding? You're about to kill Me. Go ahead, fill up your guilt, you serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? Therefore behold, I'm sending you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of them you'll kill and crucify, some of them you'll scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city." He's saying, "You're not even done with this. You're not even done with this. You're going to persecute the Christian preachers that are to come. And you're going to...you're literally going to feel the full guilt of all the righteous bloodshed on earth from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zachariah the son of Barachiah in whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. This is the most murderous of all the murderous generations in the history of Israel because you're going to be worse than any. You're going to kill the very Messiah of God and then you're going to slaughter all of His preachers that you can get your hands on.

And then He says these familiar words, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. Behold, your house is left to you desolate.” That’s what they did to the slaves. In the end, the owner says, “I’ll send My beloved Son.” Who is that? Jesus Christ. At His baptism, “This is My beloved Son,” the Father said...the beloved Son...so identified here, one more to send, a beloved son.

He’s distinct from all the other messengers. He’s not a slave, He’s a Son, the only Son, God’s last messenger, the heir to all God’s possessions, the one who had all rights to obedience and honor, all divine authority. They ought to respect Him. But they didn’t. They said, “This is the heir, let’s kill Him and we’ll take everything.” That was the attitude of the leaders of Israel. We want the power, we want the prestige, we want the religion, we want the accolades of the people and we want the control and this means we have to get rid of Him and then we inherit the power in Judaism.

So in the story they killed Him, and that’s the crucifixion. They had been long planning His death because He was a threat to their power and prestige and control. They were going to do exactly what their fathers and predecessors had done. They were just going to be the next and the last generation to kill the prophets. And then were going to transition out of that generation and they were going to be the fist generation to slaughter the saints and the preachers of the gospel.

In the story, they not only killed the Son, they threw Him out of the vineyard which probably refers to the fact that the whole nation rejected Christ. “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” They threw Him out...threw Him out. And they said, “The Kingdom is ours, the inheritance is ours.

What is the Lord going to do to those people? He will come, verse 9 says, and destroy them. Divine judgment by God. God has been very patient for a very long time, hasn’t He? Hundreds of years have gone back since the last judgment fell on that nation. Vengeance will come from God against the false and wicked religious leaders and all who follow them. This will come in 70 A.D. and with it will come the death of hundreds of thousands of Jews in a massacre which is really horrific as the Romans come and massacre the people and tear the temple down so that not one stone stands on another. And then they went through almost a thousand villages in Israel and towns and massacred people everywhere in the subsequent years. That’s divine judgment. And as God used the Babylonians as His instrument of judgment, here He used the Romans. Such devastation was that, that the temple has never been rebuilt, all the records have been destroyed at that point in time so no one knows what tribe they’re in, therefore no one knows who the priests are. There are no tribal identifications. There is no priesthood, there are no sacrifices, there are no ceremonies, there are no Sadducees, no Pharisees, no priests, no chief priests, the whole system was absolutely destroyed.

And that wasn’t the worst of it. It wasn’t the worst of it that the system was destroyed, the worst of it was all the people part of the system were catapulted into eternal hell. They have been given a

stewardship. Do you understand that? Religious leadership, they were given a stewardship of the oracles of God on behalf of the people of God and they prostituted that and it was taken away from them in a devastating judgment, as it had been in the Babylonian judgment.

But what does it mean when it says He will give the vineyard to others? He will give the vineyard to others, what does that mean? Matthew 21:43 says, “The Kingdom of God will be taken from you and be given to a people bringing forth the fruits of it. It’s going to be taken from you.”

What does that mean? It means this, He’s talking about the leaders. He’s talking about the tenant farmers, He’s not talking about the people. He has His people but He has put different people in charge of them. Others will be the custodians of the truth, others will be the custodians of the Scripture, others will have the responsibility to give spiritual oversight and spiritual leadership to His vineyard, to His people.

Who will be the new stewards? Who are the new Kingdom stewards? Who are those responsible for the reception of and the proclamation of and the preservation of the truth? The answer...the Apostles...the Apostles. This is literally a horrendous scandal to the leaders of Israel, the highfalutin Sanhedrin people to think that those nobodies from Galilee, those Twelve ordinary men would become the new stewards of divine revelation to be disseminated to the people of God. This is a massive transition here. The transition had already begun, hadn’t it? Jesus had given authority to His Apostles, authority over disease, authority over demons, and given them the truth, told them to go preach the Kingdom, preach the gospel. We...we’ve seen that already in their commissioning back in the sixth chapter of Mark. This transition has taken place.

The next night, Thursday night, this is Wednesday, Thursday night He will meet with His disciples in the upper room and He’ll tell them this. “The Holy Spirit is going to come and He’s going to lead you in to all truth.” Why does He say that? Because you’re going to be the stewards of truth, the unrevealed truth, the mysteries that have been hidden from ages past and are now revealed, they’re going to be revealed to you. The Holy Spirit is going to reveal all truth to you. The Holy Spirit is going to take the things of Mine and show them to you. You see that in the Upper Room in chapter 14, 15 and 16, He repeats it six times that He’s going to give revelation to them so that the New Testament then is written by the Apostles and those who were the associates of the apostles. They had the stewardship, they were the repositories of truth, they were the means by which God distributed that revelation as we know as the New Testament which completes His revelation and they became the stewards of that revelation.

That is why when the early church got together, right away, you know, they came together in Acts chapter 2 and they got together and what did they study? They studied the Pharisees doctrine? No. Did they study the rabbis doctrine? No. Did they study the priests doctrine? Did they study the Sadducees doctrine? No. They studied the Apostles doctrine. This is a huge transition. All the rabbis

of the past don't matter. You can take all that rabbinical teaching and just set it aside, it doesn't matter. They are not the stewards of divine truth. They're not. The only way to understand the Old Testament is to understand the New Testament. The Old Testament is incomprehensible without the New Testament, without Christ. And the rabbis who added to Scripture and convoluted Scripture and confounded Scripture and misrepresented Scripture, they're no source. The new stewards are the Apostles. And consequently and subsequently all who hold to and proclaim the Apostles doctrine carry on that stewardship. It may be amazing to you to think about it but all the faithful preachers and teachers of the Apostles doctrine today, all the faithful preachers and teachers of the New Testament are in the line of that stewardship.

Well that's the end of the parable, but that really isn't the end of the story. And the Lord knows it because at this point, when the story ends, the Son is dead. And we don't want to stay there, right? So the Lord ends the story but adds a most important word, and in it is a sort of built-in indictment. The first thing He says after that is, verse 10, "Have you not even read the Scripture?" Wow, what an indictment! You are supposed to be the ones who are the stewards of the truth. You are supposed to be the ones who disseminate divine truth to the people. You are the self-proclaimed and self-confessed teachers of Israel. Have you not even read? He said that to them many times, didn't He? Indicting them for their ignorance.

Another indictment of them. How about this, He says, have you not read any quotes from Psalm 1:18? This is pretty selective on His part because Monday when He came into town, they were shouting a verse from Psalm 118. "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," Psalm 118 verse 26. So He's saying to them, "Okay, you want to go back to Psalm 118 here?" This is out of Psalm 118, "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone and there's no human explanation for that. This came about from the Lord and it is marvelous in our eyes." That's right out of Psalm 118, that's verses 22 and 23 and He says to them, "Don't you even read the Scripture? Don't you even understand that the one who you reject will come back as the cornerstone? Cornerstone meaning that stone from which all lines move to build the Kingdom. Don't you even understand that? The one that you reject will come back to be the cornerstone of the Kingdom. Inherent in that is His resurrection, right? You're not finished with Him. He'll come back and He will be the cornerstone from which all the lines whether they are horizontal lines or vertical lines move, He is the cornerstone.

Acts 4:11, 1 Peter 2:6 through 8, Romans 9:32 and 33, Ephesians 2:20, all of those refer to Christ as the cornerstone, Christ as the cornerstone. You know Ephesians 2:20, "The church is built on the foundation of the Apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone." That's what sets all the lines.

There will be no human explanation for this. That is what verse 23 means, this came about from the Lord and we're all going to have to say it's marvelous in our eyes. Is there anything more marvelous than the resurrection of Jesus Christ? There's no human explanation.

The Son then in the story dies. The metaphor shifts from a vineyard to a building. And the Son becomes the stone. The Son becomes the stone. And the moving of our Lord from an analogy to a prophecy is a further indictment of the very reason why the stewardship is being removed from them. They don't know the Scripture.

For them, the stone didn't measure up. It was a rejected stone, inadequate, imperfect, unacceptable, not to be the head of the corner, not to support the whole structure and symmetry of God's glorious Kingdom. They were wrong. He was God's cornerstone, the very one of whom they said, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" is that cornerstone. So Jesus pulls Monday into Wednesday.

Luke adds something that we must close with. Luke writing about the same parable, adds the fact that Jesus had one more thing. Listen to this. After quoting from Psalm 118, Jesus said this, "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces and on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." This is a crushing statement about judgment. Jesus is not only the cornerstone that gives structure and symmetry to the church, but He is the crushing judgment stone on all those who reject Him. That's drawn, by the way, those words in Luke 20:18 are drawn from an old rabbinic saying. The rabbis used to say, "If a stone falls on a pot, it will crush the pot. If a pot falls on a stone, it will shatter the pot." Either way, whether the pot falls on the stone, or the stone falls on the pot, the results are the same. So whether you fall on Christ, or Christ falls on you, the end is the same.

By the way, one of the early Christian titles for Christ was the stone. You...you are certainly blessed to be part of the Kingdom built on the cornerstone. You are certainly damned to be crushed by Him.

The response...we saw the parable, a little of the interpretation, the response in verse 12. They were seeking to seize Him. Boy, this just escalated their fury. Talk about confrontation. "And they feared the people though, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them."

Do you get it? The people got it and they got it. They knew what He was talking about. They knew their history. They knew their ancestors had slaughtered the prophets and mistreated the prophets. And they knew what they were planning for Jesus. And Jesus had said it. They knew.

That would have been a good moment to repent, don't you think? "They didn't, they just left and went away...left and went away." There's some pathos in that, isn't there? They went away really forever, in one sense. Although it wasn't for long in reality because in verse 13 they're back. From that perspective, they came right back, same day. But from the spiritual perspective, they never came back. And at the end of this day, they were done with them for good.

Did Jesus know He was going to die? Sure. He knew the details. He knew how it fit into the history of Israel. And He knew that He would conquer death and rise again, as He kept saying, and become the

cornerstone, rejected and yet exalted. And then for many...most, a judgment stone. Christ is to you either the cornerstone and you're part of the glory of that Kingdom He is building, or He is the crushing stone and your faith in Jesus Christ makes all the difference. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we thank You, this morning, for again a wonderful time of fellowship and worship with those we love and those whom You love and those who love You. We are a fellowship of love, even though the message we bring is firm and exclusive and serious. Thank You for loving us enough to send Christ. Thank You for loving us enough to give us the warnings. I pray today there won't be anybody here who like these would turn and walk away, perhaps never to come again. O Lord, I just pray that today they'll be some who would run from the crushing to the cornerstone to be part of that glorious and eternal joy that belongs to those who are in Your Kingdom. Thank You again for the reality of Scripture that it comes on us with such power and such clarity that we know we're hearing from You. What a privilege. We'll give You thanks for that in Christ's name. Amen.

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