

**The Murder of God's Son: A Prophetic Parable, Part 2**

Scripture: Luke 20:9-18

Code: 42-246

Let's look at Luke 20. Luke 20:9-16 is the parable that we began to study in our last session. Our Lord Jesus invented the most clear, and powerful, and stunning, and sometimes shocking stories using very simple, very familiar, very common features and elements. He devised stories that were sweeping in their comprehension, and profound in their depth, and disturbingly convicting in their penetrating analysis of the condition of the listeners.

There are about 40 parables of our Lord given in the gospels. One of my objectives in life, if the Lord allows me to do it, is to write a book on all the parables, to pull them all together in one book, the great, great parabolic teaching of our Lord Jesus. It covers so much great biblical material. We'll see if that ever happens.

But among the parables of our Lord, this one before us really stands out. It is a remarkable, remarkable story with very far-reaching and important significance. Let me read it to you again, starting in Luke 20:9, a prophetic parable we could entitle "The Murder of God's Son." The Murder of God's Son.

Verse 9, "He began to tell the people this parable: 'A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time. And at the *harvest* time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order that they might give him *some* of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty-handed. And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out.

" 'And the owner of the vineyard said, "What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him." But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, "This is the heir, let us kill him that the inheritance might be ours." And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, therefore, will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, 'May it never be!'

"

A quick review of the background. This is Wednesday, Wednesday of the week in which our Lord is crucified. He is in the temple. He spends the day there from early morning teaching. He dominates the temple because the day before He had devastated the temple businesses by throwing them out,

cleansing His Father's house. Now it has become a classroom for Him. The 1st verse of chapter 20 tells us that He is in the temple preaching the gospel, and teaching the people, and being confronted by the religious leaders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders.

It is a very, very excited crowd that listens to Jesus, still living off the high of His triumphal entry and hoping He will be the Messiah they want. They're excited and enthusiastic listeners to what Jesus has to say, but at the same time the leaders of Israel hate Him, despise Him, and are now more furious at Him than ever because He has cleansed out their businesses and basically done it without any authorization, which prompted them to ask Him by what authority He did this. They have always wanted Him dead. They want Him dead now more than ever, and they will have Him dead at the hands of the Romans by Friday.

It is in this setting on Wednesday in that week that our Lord is teaching. And one of the parables among several - Luke gives us one, Matthew gives us a couple of the others that He taught that Wednesday. But among those parables is this one, a very simple story about a man who owned a vineyard and rented it out to some tenant farmers under contract who agreed to pay him a certain amount. They could keep the rest. And he sent his slaves to collect what was due him by contract. They mistreated the slaves. He in an act of good faith and patience sent his own son, thinking if they didn't respect slaves, they would at least respect his son. They killed the son in an effort to gain complete control of the vineyard. Everybody listening to the story would have agreed with the conclusion. Kill them and hire some new farmers. Simple story.

We went through that story calling it the illustration. The second point was the explanation. Do you remember? We drew you to verse 16 for that. "When they heard it they said, 'May it never be!'" When they heard it, *akou*, meaning "when they understood it." When they knew what He was saying in the story to what it referred, then they said, "No, no, no, no." And what is the interpretation? What is the explanation?

The man who owns the land is God. The vineyard is Israel. The vine-growers are the religious leaders, primarily the priests and all other religious leaders who take responsibility to shepherd Israel, as it were, or to tend God's vineyard. The long journey in which he is away is Old Testament history, all the way from the beginning of Israel in the life of Abraham to the coming of Jesus, that long time when the people of God were under the care of certain men.

The slaves in the story that are sent are the Old Testament prophets who were sent by God from time to time through Israel's history to receive the fruit that was due to God. And they came to reiterate God's will and God's Law, and to call for obedience, and to call for the people to bear fruit unto God. And you remember the stories of the Old Testament tell us how they rejected the prophets, how they hated the prophets, how they stoned the prophets, sawed them in half, killed them, so much so that Jerusalem is known as that city that kills the prophets. Finally God says, "I'll send My beloved Son,"

who is none other than Jesus Christ and they kill Him.

And so, Jesus is telling Israel its history. You have been under the care of certain leaders who were placed by God in responsibility over you that you might produce spiritual fruit. They failed miserably. And when God came in the way of His prophets to demand some spiritual fruit, to call for some spiritual fruit, you mistreated, and maligned, and even killed the prophets. And now God has sent His Son, and what will these same spiritual leaders do? The priests, the chief priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the elders of Israel? They will kill the Son. Just two days after this, they'll have the Romans nail Him to a cross after they have intimidated the Romans screaming for His crucifixion and settling for nothing less. And why? Because they want the inheritance. They want control over the people. They want to run God's kingdom, if you will, their way.

And what will God do to them? Two things: One, destroy them. Verse 16, "He will come and destroy those vine-growers." And I told you last time, that looks forward 40 years from 30 A.D. when this happened to 70 A.D. when Titus Vespasian, the Roman general, came with his great Roman army to quell a rebellion of the Jews that began four years earlier in the destruction, the final destruction of Jerusalem, and the temple, and its environs, laying it leveled to the ground. Divine judgment.

It was not only a temporal judgment on the building, and the city, and the people, it was an eternal judgment because the masses of people, hundreds of thousands of them that were killed in that holocaust were catapulted into hell, where they will remain forever, having rejected their Messiah. Destruction did come. And for the unbelievers and rejecters of Christ, it lasts forever.

The second thing is displacement. Destruction and then displacement. "Give the vineyard to others." Give the vineyard to others. Give the vineyard into the care of others. That is, take away the stewardship of Israel's religious leaders over God's people and give that stewardship to others. Others are religious leaders. And the idea of the story is that God removed from the leadership of Israel the stewardship of His people.

They had been custodians of God's truth. If you will remember Romans chapter 9, you surely remember how Paul lists the privileges that Israel had been given, the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the temple service, the promises, the fathers, Christ.

They had been given everything, all of that embodied in the Old Testament Scriptures. And the leaders of Israel, the priests, and the scribes, and the Pharisees, and the Sadducees, and the elders, and all who had assumed to spiritual leadership there, and all who were in the priestly families and the priestly line were the custodians of truth. They were the custodians of Scripture. They were the custodians of the covenants of God. They had the responsibility to bring about in Israel the production of good spiritual fruit, the fruit of righteousness.

But now our Lord says, "Not only will this generation be destroyed, but the custodianship of Israel will pass from the hands of these apostate, untrue, unfaithful, Messiah-rejecting leaders to others."

And by the way, in the destruction of Jerusalem, all the records were destroyed, all the family records, all the genealogical records. No one existed after that time. No generation now can go back and look at their genealogy. They're all destroyed. They can't identify the priestly family. They can't identify even their tribal ancestry. It was the end. And the temple has never been rebuilt, the records never restored. They can't be.

What does this mean? Others will become custodians of the truth of God. Others will become custodians of the people of God. Who are the others? A footnote, Matthew 21:43 says, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a people, bringing forth the fruit of it." So with this new custodianship will come a new people who will bring forth righteous fruit unlike Israel of old. An apostate people with apostate leaders.

God sets them aside in the obliteration of the destruction of 70 A.D. and in comes a new leadership and a new people. The new leadership will be faithful to the stewardship, and the new people will be faithful to follow that stewardship. Others will become custodians of God's truth, custodians of the Scripture.

Who are these others? This is the worst case scenario for the Jews. This is the most horrible reality that they could ever imagine. But it is the fact that the new leaders of Israel are none other than the followers of Jesus Christ. They hated Jesus Christ. They had nothing but disdain, and scorn, and ridicule for His followers who were a bunch of Galilean low-lives, at best, without rabbinic training, without rabbinic credentials, nobodies. They are to become the new custodians of God's kingdom, of God's work of redemption among men.

It is not just as simple as this is the Gentiles replacing the Jews, or this is the church replacing Israel. There were Gentiles who had proselyted into the nation Israel and were worshiping the true God in the Old Testament and there are Jews today in the church of Jesus Christ, hundreds of thousands of them.

It is not just a simple shift from Jew to Gentile, although obviously the people of God in the past were predominantly Jewish and now are predominantly Gentile. It is a shift in leadership. That's what our Lord is talking about. And of all people, the new leadership are the despised apostles and disciples of Jesus.

Now this shouldn't surprise anybody because this transition has already been happening. And I'm going to show it to you briefly. There's a lot to say about this and I have only today to say it. Here we

go. Chapter 9 of Luke, chapter 9. And if you just want to listen and write them down, it may save you some stress. I don't want to do that. "He called the twelve together - " this is relatively early in His ministry " - gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. Sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing."

Verse 6. "They *began* going about among the villages preaching the gospel and healing everywhere." They had power and truth that the leaders of Israel did not have. The leaders of Israel were not authentic. They were not authorized by God. They were not empowered, and they did not know and they did not proclaim the truth. Here early in His ministry, our Lord commissions the twelve, gives them power and authority over demons and disease, and sends them to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom. That is the way of salvation and entrance into God's kingdom. I say the transition has already begun. They are to be the new caretakers, the new custodians, the new stewards, the new vine-growers in God's vineyard.

Chapter 10 of Luke unfolds in an even a more extensive way. Verse 1, "The Lord appointed 70 others - " 70 others " - sent them 2 by 2 ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, the laborers are few; beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your ways, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.' "

He viewed the religious leaders of Israel as the wolves dressed in sheep's clothing. He now sends 70 out who are to go with the true message as lambs representing God. The transition has already begun. Here are 70 no-names and 12 very common men given this immense responsibility. They are the new stewards of the kingdom and the truth of God. 10:17, "The 70 returned - " after going out into all these places. They went out 2 by 2, 35 teams of them " - saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' " They expressed that power. They saw it. They experienced it.

Go down to verse 23. "Turning to the disciples, He said privately, 'Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things you see, for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wish to see the things which you see, and didn't see *them*, to hear the things which you hear, and didn't hear them.' " You are getting privileges that people have longed for through the centuries, privileges that do not, in any sense, belong to the leaders of Israel. You are seeing things, and learning things, and receiving power, and doing things that indicate that you are to be the new custodians of divine truth.

In Matthew 13:11, such a great statement. He says to His disciples, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted." To you has been given something that has not been given to anybody else, and that is to know the mysteries, that is the now revealed but formerly hidden truths concerning the kingdom of God. New Testament truth. New Testament truth.

Look again at Matthew chapter 16, this most notable and familiar text, and how it connects to this point. Jesus is having a discussion with His apostles and disciples and He asks the question to them in Matthew 16:15, "Who do you say that I am?" Let's go back to basics here. Who am I? "Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ - " the Messiah " - the Son of the living God.'" That's true. "And Jesus answered and said to him, 'You're blessed, Simon, son of Jonas, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.'" You're among a privileged group of to whom God, My Father, is granting revelation, revelation, direct revelation. You see things others don't see. You hear and understand what others don't hear and understand. What is a riddle to some in a parable that cannot be solved is to you clear and understandable. You have power that the leaders of Israel do not have over demons, over disease, over death.

And so again I say, the transition has already happened. And it goes further, verse 18, "I say to you, Peter, you are Peter, and upon this rock - " the rock of the truth which you and the other apostles confess to be true " - I will build My church."

Ephesians 2:20 says the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ being the chief corner *stone*." This is the new leadership in the church: The apostles and the preachers who preach the New Testament, who wrote the New Testament. On you and the truths that you proclaim, I will build My church, the primary truth being the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. And consequently, verse 19, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." You're going to unlock the kingdom and let people in.

What did the leaders of Israel produce? Sons of God? No. Sons of hell. Sons of hell. Their converts were sons of hell, Jesus said. They had no keys to unlock the kingdom. They had a false religious system. I give you the keys. "Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." You operate with heaven's blessing.

You say, "Well how can you loose people's sins and bind people's sins? Very simple. If you say to someone, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be forgiven." And they say, "I will not believe." You can say, "You're bound in your sin." If you say to someone, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be forgiven," and they do believe. You can say, "You're loosed from your sin." You can say that because you know the truth. You know the gospel that saves.

Here is this nondescript little collection of weak-faithed men, many as seven of them, perhaps, fishermen, unskilled, untrained, unimportant by the world's standard, and certainly by Israel's religious measurement. And they are the new leaders of God's vineyard, the new vine-growers, the new stewards, the new custodians of a new people of God. And at the end, you remember, of Matthew, when our Lord gives them their final commission, the eleven are in Galilee and they see Jesus, verse 17, "they worshiped Him; some were still doubtful."

Jesus ended all doubt when He came up and spoke to them and He said this, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations." You are the ones. You go. You "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." You go. You're My representatives. You're the new tenant farmers, the new contract workers, the new vine-growers in My vineyard.

This is the stewardship that was given to the apostles and the apostles were faithful to it. The apostle Paul himself, added to the original group, was a steward of the mysteries of God. First Corinthians 4, he said he is a steward. "Consider me as a steward of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful."

At the end of Romans, Romans 16, he talks about how he had been given a stewardship of mysteries. Read Ephesians 3. In fact, it's worth looking at just briefly because he says, "I am a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles. If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which has been given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery."

God revealed to me supernaturally the things that were hidden and are now revealed which always refers to New Testament truth. I am now a steward of these mysteries. These are mysteries, He says, "which in other generations were not made known to the sons of men, but have now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit." These are the new leaders of His redeemed people. This by the grace of God, not by any merit.

Then in Ephesians 4, "He gave some apostles, some prophets, and then came some evangelists, and then some pastor-teachers - " and they've all come to take on into the next generation this responsibility of spiritual leadership, " - for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, the measure of the stature of the fullness that belongs to Christ."

So the work of God in building up the body of Christ through evangelism and edification is given to a new stewardship. It is those who start with the apostles, and then the New Testament prophets, and then come the evangelists, and teaching pastors, who build their teaching in their ministry on what was revealed to those early apostles and the associates of the apostles who wrote the New Testament.

I today am one in this long line of stewards. I am one of the far-removed generation of the others to whom stewardship of God's truth and Scripture and the people of God has been given, and so is any faithful minister.

Another way to look at this same transition is in John 14 as our Lord is giving His last words in the upper room with His disciples on the night of the Passover on Thursday of that week.

He says so many marvelous things to them. One of the things that He says to them and repeats it is very, very important. It has to do with truth. John 14:25. "The things I've spoken to you while abiding with you." And He's been saying a lot of things. "I have spoken to you concerning these things while I've been with you. But - " this is very important " - the Helper, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

That's an amazing thing. They've been with Jesus three years. He had said a lot. He had been speaking every single day for three years, far more than is in the Scripture. John says the things He said couldn't be contained in all the books of the world. How are they ever going to be able as stewards of this responsibility to remember the things that He wanted them to remember? Well He says, "When I leave, the Spirit comes. When the Spirit comes, the Spirit becomes the one who brings these things to your remembrance so that you can write them down. So that you can proclaim them."

In 15:26 He says it another way. "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father - " the Comforter " - *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me - " The Holy Spirit will come and He'll tell you about Me " - and you *will* bear witness also, because you've been with Me from the beginning." So here again the promise of the Spirit coming to them to enable them to remember to recall, to understand, and even to record all that God wants them to put down for every succeeding generation, this basically becomes, of course, the New Testament.

In 16:12, "I have many more things to say to you." Said many, has many more to say. I can't say them now because "you can't bear *them* now." It's more than you can take. It's overload. "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, whatever He hears, He will speak; He will disclose to you what is to come."

He'll help you remember the past and He'll also tell you the future, and you will have Spirit-inspired truth, and you will record it. Peter says, "Men moved by the Holy Spirit wrote it down." It becomes holy *graph*, Scripture. This is the new stewardship.

First the apostles and the associates of the apostles who were involved in the writing of the New Testament. Then the prophets who proclaimed what was spoken by the apostles and would be written. And then every generation of faithful evangelists and teaching pastors ever since who carried on this stewardship, they are the new leaders and under their leadership has come a new people of God that are producing fruit that brings honor to God, the true and living church.



Our stewardship is pretty simple, I think. Preach the Word. Is that what it says? Second Timothy 4, "Preach the Word, Preach the Word, in season, out of season, preach the Word." Give yourself to sound doctrine, Paul says to Titus. Take care of two things, he tells Timothy, 1 Timothy 4:16, "yourself and your teaching." Read the Scripture. Explain the Scripture. Apply the Scripture. This is our stewardship.

In 1 Timothy 6, right at the very end of 1 Timothy, 6:20, "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you - " the *parathk*, it's a word that means "a bank deposit." Paul says, "I deposited truth with you. I deposited Holy Spirit inspired truth with you. Guard that truth. Avoid all the lies, all the deception, and guard the truth." That's the end of 1 Timothy.

At the beginning of 2 Timothy, across the page, 1:14, "Guard, through the Holy Spirit that dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to *you*." What's the treasure? Sound words, verse 13, "Sound words which you heard from me." The apostles got it. Paul got it. Timothy got it. Titus got it. The next generation, and it keeps being passed on, and here it is. These are the truths that the Spirit of God inspired the apostles and their associates to write down, and this is the stewardship to which we are called.

We are tenant farmers. We have been hired by God under contract, gifted and called to go into this world in a responsibility that has no parallel, and no equal, and that is to take care of the vineyard of God in such a way as to produce fruit unto righteousness that brings Him glory. Not to produce sons of hell, but to produce sons of God, sons of God.

And so the story ends with displacement. And that leads to a footnote question. Is that a permanent displacement of Israel? Now if you've been here on Sunday night, what's the answer to that? No. It is a temporary one, and there will be a future time when Israel again will be restored, not just to salvation, not just to a kingdom, but to a stewardship of truth.

One of the amazing characteristics of the end time is this. There is coming a time called the tribulation, described very clearly in detail in Revelation from chapter 6 to 19, a long extended session. In that time called tribulation, God selects 144,000 Jews - 12,000 out of every tribe, and He knows what tribe they're in, they don't - to evangelize the world. They will be converted. They will become evangelists. You can read about them in Revelation 7 and Revelation 14.

Then when you get into the kingdom, and Christ is come and set up His kingdom, and He's reigning in Jerusalem, and He's set up His throne there to rule the world, and Israel receives all of the promises given to Abraham, and David, and the prophets, Abrahamic Covenant, Davidic Covenant, New Covenant promises, once again the Jews will become the stewards of God's truth. They will become stewards of His truth in the tribulation, and also then in the kingdom.

Let me show you a fascinating passage among many that will make the point clear. Zechariah chapter 8 - Zechariah chapter 8. I can't do more than this. I don't have time to do more, but this should be enough. Zechariah is a prophet looking to the future. In chapter 8 he sees down into the future by God's inspiration. Verse 1, "The Word of the Lord of hosts came, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "I'm exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I'm jealous for her." Thus says the Lord, "I will return to Zion. I will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be called the City of -" ' ' " what? " " " - Truth." ' ' " Wow. That's future. It's not now. And it wasn't in our Lord's time. "Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth and the mountain of the Lord of hosts *will be called* the Holy Mountain."

It will be truth and holiness. "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age.' " They'll have their canes right there with them. " 'And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in the streets.' Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, it will also be too difficult in My sight?' declares the Lord of hosts." If that seems impossible to you, is it too hard for Me? "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and the land of the west; and I'm going to bring them *back* and they'll live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they'll be My people, and I'll be their God in truth and righteousness.' " Is that hard to interpret? Doesn't seem too hard for me.

But drop down to verse 20, in the middle of this, in this great future time in the kingdom, "Thus says the Lord of hosts - " verse 20, " '*It will yet be* that people will come - ' " nations will come, literally, nations will come " ' - even the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one will go to another saying, "Let's go at once to entreat the favor of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I will also go." ' " From all over the world they're going to say, "Let's go to Jerusalem. Let's go to Jerusalem." So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem. That's where He's going to be. That's where He's going to be reigning. And to entreat the favor of the Lord.

I love verse 23. "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'In those days ten men from all the nations - ' " ten Gentiles " ' - will hang on the garment of one Jew, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." ' " That's the kingdom.

The whole world is going to be hanging on the garments of the Jews wanting to be taken to meet the Lord. Again in God's sweet providence and grace, they will be restored to be the stewards of truth and holiness again. But for now, "until the times of the Gentiles is complete," Luke 21:24, we'll get to that in a couple of weeks, or a couple of months, thinking about it, until that time there's a new leadership, and we are that new leadership, and you are that new people following that new leadership.

Is that the end of this account? Now, we've got a problem, folks, because the last word in that story was that they killed the son, right? That can't be the end, and it's not. Go back to chapter 20. They panic when they understand the meaning of the story. They panic at the thought of destruction and displacement. And they should.

But He looked at them and said this. "What then is this that is written?" That little phrase "that is written," is a reference to the Old Testament that they would clearly understand. In fact, in Matthew's account of Jesus telling this story, Matthew says, "Don't you know what Scripture teaches?" Or, "Have you never read the Scripture?" This is a reference to Scripture. "Have you forgotten Scripture?"

This takes us from the illustration to the explanation to the extension. Here our Lord extends His teaching. The parable has ended. The end is tragic for the vine-growers. It's tragic for those who follow the vine-growers. It's tragic, at this point, for the son. He's dead. But the death of the son can't be the end of the story. So he looks at them and says, "In case you're wondering if that's the end of the story, have you forgotten the Scripture?" And He quotes Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner *stone*."

He takes them from the analogy and the parable that He developed right into the Old Testament. This is not the end of the story. Lest you think it's the end of the story, think again. Have you forgotten Scripture? Scripture says that the stone rejected becomes the chief corner stone.

Well, what is the importance of that? It's very simple because they would understand it clearly. They knew the Hallel very well. They knew Psalm 118, probably most of them knew it by memory, certainly the leaders did, the chief corner stone. They may have even given messianic overtones to that because in Daniel chapter 2, the Messiah who comes to smash the image in Daniel's vision is the "stone cut out without hands." The Messiah was known in some circles as the stone. The stone that the builders rejected has become the corner stone.

I'll tell you how that works. If you're going to build a building, in ancient times you build it out - a great edifice - out of stone, there's one stone that has to be perfect. That's the corner stone. And it has to be perfect in every direction. It has to be perfect on the bottom so the building is flat. It has to be perfect on the sides so the building rises in a perfect perpendicular fashion. It has to be perfect on the top so it doesn't tilt, and the angle has to be exact or the building is going to wander off out of symmetry. The corner stone sets every angle for the building.

Builders knew that then they were going to build a building, they had to have an absolutely perfect corner stone. How many stones if you're going to build a great edifice would you throw away before you found the perfect one? Realizing that all these stones were hewn by hand, you would come across a stone and say, "Almost, but not quite."

You've got one side of the stone that's going that way and if we follow that line, it's not going to work. The angle is just off a little tiny bit and that's going to send this building away from symmetry. How many stones would they throw in a pile and say, "Well maybe we can cut that one up and use it somewhere else," before they found a perfect corner stone?

And now in the teaching of Jesus, the illustration has shifted and the Son has become a stone. The Son is now the stone which the builders rejected. They had said, "You're not perfect. We don't accept You as the corner stone to God's kingdom."

If you go back into the Hallel in Psalm 118 and interpret that in its context, it there, historically, looks at Israel. And God is, in a sense, condemning the nations because in the great empire building that was going on all around Israel, nobody paid attention to Israel. They were rejected. That rejected nation will become God's corner stone nation because that rejected Messiah will become God's corner stone Redeemer.

And so what in its initial interpretation looked at Israel, the corner stone nation to God's history, and the destiny of the whole world tied to that one little nation, even though it was rejected by the nations all around it and always has been, is now ultimately become true only because Christ is Himself that true corner stone that gives genuine shape to His people and will one day when Israel is saved.

But here, obviously, our Lord refers to Himself. He is the stone which the builders rejected. This is a very familiar New Testament quote. Acts 4:11 – 4:10 "Let it be known to all of you," Peter is preaching here, "Let it be known to all of you to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead - by this *name* the man stands here before you in good health. He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, *but* which became the very corner *stone*."

He's talking to the rulers, the elders, and the scribes, and Annas, and Caiaphas, and all the leaders, and he says, "You rejected Him. You rejected Him as the corner stone and He rejects you. And guess what? The stone which you rejected is back and it's the corner stone." The Son is the stone and He has returned. That is resurrection, dear friends. That is resurrection.

The story does not end with a dead Son, for the stone in which the builders rejected to become the chief corner stone. There has to be a restoration. In Jesus' case, a resurrection. And He will die on Friday, but He will rise on Sunday. The stone that did not measure up to their standards, the stone that did not fit what they were trying to build, the stone rejected by the Jewish leadership and the nation as inadequate, and imperfect, and unacceptable, and flawed becomes the most important stone in the eternal kingdom of God, the kingdom which God Himself is building becomes *kephaln gnias*, the head of the corner, supporting the whole structure and symmetry of God's glorious

kingdom of salvation.

And so, the explanation has an extension to finish the story. But that's not the final word. The final word is in verse 18. This is a threat. I guess you could call it an application. It's more than that. It's a serious threat. The question that is being posed behind the statement of verse 18 is, "You had better be careful how you engage yourself with Jesus Christ." "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."

What is that? That is a way of saying this: A collision with the stone will destroy you. It will destroy you. This is Old Testament imagery as well. They must have known Isaiah chapter 8, a couple of verses there. Listen, Isaiah 8:14, "But He shall become a sanctuary; -" speaking of the Lord " - But to both houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over." Verse 15, "And many will stumble over them, will fall and be broken." Isaiah said He will be a stumbling stone, a crushing stone, a deadly stone.

Paul in Romans 9 says, "They stumbled over the stumbling stone," referring to Israel. Verse 32. "They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written." And he quotes from that passage in Isaiah 8, and also from Isaiah 28:16, which says essentially the same thing. "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling, a rock of offense. And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." Either you believe in Him, or you stumble over Him, you're crushed by Him.

This weighed, I think, on the heart of Peter. He says this, 1 Peter 2:6, "For this is contained in Scripture: 'I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner *stone*.'" That's Isaiah 28:16 again. " 'He who believes in Him shall not be disappointed.' This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, 'The stone which the builders rejected, This becomes the very corner *stone*,' and, 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.' " And that's Peter picking up these very words of Jesus, where Jesus puts these two ideas together: The stone the builders rejected becomes the corner stone, and the stone of stumbling over which you stumble, or under which you are crushed.

In the ancient times it has been discovered that there was a rabbinic saying that might be behind this. It goes like this and it's an ancient one. "If a stone falls on a pot, it will smash the pot. If a pot falls on a stone, it will smash the pot." Whether the stone falls on the pot or the pot falls on the stone, the results will be the same because the stone will not be broken. This is a way of saying if you encounter Jesus Christ and you have a collision of any kind with Him, you will be pulverized. No way around it. No way around it.

Our Lord was so straightforward. This is a message of love and warning, terrifying. Our Lord found no joy in it. That's why He wept back in 19:41 when He came to Jerusalem. Rejecting Jesus Christ is the most tragic thing anyone can ever do. The message right to the heart of the most important choice you will ever make in your life. What will you do with Jesus Christ? Will you submit to Him, embrace

Him as Lord and Savior? Or collide with Him as a crushing stone?

How did the leaders respond? Look at verse 19. "And the scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them." They knew He was talking about them. He was condemning them. Instead of being convicted, instead of being penitent, they heightened their efforts to kill Him. How sad. How tragic. This was their last hour. John says, "He who has the Son has life. He that has not the Son of God has not life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

How about you? Where do you stand? Do you submit to Christ as Lord and Savior and Redeemer? Or will you collide with Him as your crushing judge?

Father, do a work in the heart of every person here. Lord, we understand that all You can do is to lay out the truth to us for which we are then accountable and then You hold us responsible. Thank You for grace. Thank You that You are as we read in that same Psalm, You are our strength and song, and You have become not our judge, but our salvation. Bring that salvation to hearts today. This we ask for His glory. Amen.

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