

Jesus returned to the Temple having entered and inspected it the previous evening after His entry procession into the city. He had some house cleaning to do, and tends to it. What a sight! Singlehanded, as He had three years before, He dumps the tables, coins rolling everywhere, men frantically trying to gather them up. Doves now freed, fluttering about as He drives out their sellers. (The foreign visitors bought doves for offerings. It is reported that the priests got a cut of the exorbitant profits of this monopolistic market for allowing this to go on in the Temple under their jurisdiction.) The Lord of the Temple was there. "Make not my Father's house a den of thieves." Yet His faithful actions that condemned their hearts did not soften them. They were beyond that. He simply antagonized them. They sought an opportunity to destroy Him. Throughout His last week among them He repeatedly pressed His appeals for their hearts, their souls. Appeals that, if not softening their hearts, would harden them. If they would not receive their Messiah, their Messiah's faithful witness would give heard hearts plenty of incentive to carry out the prophecies predicting His rejection and death.

Later that day another teaching moment presented itself. The fig tree He had cursed was dried up (unnaturally) from the roots. The disciples would soon be given authority to move mountains by faith, believing with prayer. Everything they needed God would provide through prayer. One condition is given here, they must first forgive anything they have against another. Doing so the Father in heaven is free to bestow answers for our requests. How often would anyone want to move a mountain? We don't read of any doing so in the New Testament or since. If we take this promise figuratively then we easily think of many problems and obstructions faced by pilgrims and evangelists that need to be overcome. Prayer in faith is the way we are given to deal with these. Paul speaks also of the need for love when overthrowing mountains, 1 Corinthians 13:2. Paul often walked though mountainous terrain on his missionary journeys. He and prophets of the Old Testament, or even Jesus, never moved them out of the way, but walked around them or through available passes. But this promise will literally be put to work in the future.

Zechariah 14:3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. 4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. 5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

Believing this prophecy beleaguered Jewish saints fleeing Jerusalem at the end of the Great Tribulation (in obedience to the Lord's command, Mark 13:14) will pray and in answer the mountain will be split as the Lord's feet alight upon it. What a sight! What an escape! What faith!

The chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders confronted Him. They couldn't stand His brazen act of expelling their crony merchants from the temple. "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?" Jesus reserved the right to receive an answer to His question before He would answer their's. His question brought them to a defining point. They must acknowledge Him as Messiah to be honest. They were cornered and had no way out but to fall on their knees before Him as their Messiah — or refuse to answer. They refused to answer for fear of the people. But since they had approached Him in an adversarial manner they could not honorably walk away until they heard His gracious, gentle appeal to them in the form of a story..

A more direct and touching appeal to men's hearts is difficult to find in scripture than the story of the vineyard. And if they would not listen in their time, others down through the centuries, in the age of God's grace to men, would hear and repent Have you?

The owner is Jehovah

The vineyard is Israel, see Isaiah 5.

The servants are the Old Testament prophets (and John the Baptist).

The keepers of the vineyard are the kings and leaders of Israel down through the ages, including present leaders.

The son of the owner is none other than the Lord Jesus Himself.

The father is portrayed as having no doubt the servants who had despitely used and even killed his servants would finally come to their senses and receive and honor his beloved son. "They will reverence my son." They didn't! The Lord exposed their selfish hearts. If they killed the heir the inheritance would become theirs. Huh? The Lord brings as clearly as possible before them the utter irrationality of their thinking. They are so covetous they don't see the doom hanging over their heads if they kill the heir.

Was God the Father so naive that He expected them to respect His beloved Son? Didn't He, being God, know their hearts and what they would do to His Son? Yes. Yet God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son. Yet along with that thought there is perhaps an additional charming way to look at this sending His one and only Son, the Heir. The Father's love is so great for the Son and the Son so precious to Him, His heart of Love cannot conceive of any one rejecting His Beloved Son or thinking of harming Him. This just deepens our sense of the immense sacrifice and gift He gave when He sent His One and Only Son. "Cross that outraged Love Paternal!" (G&T Hymn 197)

Jesus then set before them another sharp illustration to consider. A prophetic statement from a Psalm of David,

The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

Psalm 118:22

This statement is quoted no less than six times in the New Testament. The emphasis here in Mark is on **the rejection** of the stone. Other quotes have their own intent.

Psalm 118 was the last sung by the pilgrims going up to Jerusalem as they reached the gate of the city. The recent cries of “Hosanna” that so offended the leaders of Israel echoed this Psalm (v. 25). (It was also the Psalm thought by many to be the one sung by Jesus and the disciples the last night as they left the upper room to go to the garden, where He was betrayed by Judas.)

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: 20 This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. 21 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. 22 The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. 23 This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. 24 This is the day

which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. 25 Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. 26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. 27 God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. 28 Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee. 29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Psalm 118:19-29.

The leaders “sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people, for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them.” Frustrated they left Him, and went their way. Through the unanticipated “good fortune” of the betrayal by Judas they would find a way to circumvent the people. Before the week was out they actually induce the people to call for crucifying the Lord of Glory, their Messiah.

Wicked leaders!

Fickle people!

Crucified Lord.

By Ron Canner, March 28, 2007

THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REFUSED

1. The glorious King who will **fall upon** His enemies in judgement.

Matthew 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? . . . 44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

2. The faithful Prophet **rejected** by those He came to.

Mark 12:10-11 The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: 11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?

3. Those who **fall upon** it are humbled.

Luke 20:17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? 18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

4. The **solid basis** for salvation

Acts 4:10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

5. The **chief cornerstone** of the Assembly, the holy habitation of God.

Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

6. The **Head of the corner** supporting the saints as living stones, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood.

1 Peter 2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. 9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

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