

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 20- Luke 20:9-18

302- The Parable of the Vineyard- Part 1

February 14, 2016

Luke 20:9-18

9 And 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.

10 "At the *harvest* time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, so that they would give him *some* of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

11 "And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty-handed.

12 "And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out.

13 "The owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.'

14 "But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours.'

15 "So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them?

16 "He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." When they heard it, they said, "May it never be!"

17 But Jesus looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: '*THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone*'?

18 "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."

To the Glory of God

Now the context of this Parable is the Story that Jesus gives here was given during the last week of Jesus' earthly Life and is in *response* to what the Pharisees asked back in verse 2 when they said,

Luke 20:2b

... Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?

So this Parable is *not* to be taken by itself- it is *not* a "stand alone" Parable about a spiritual issue in general. This Parable is *connected* to the issue of Who or what *authorized* Jesus to do the things He did and to say the things He said.

Now we have to realize that the only reason why the Pharisees asked this question was to trap Jesus. They were *not* honestly trying to understand Jesus' Authorization- they were *not* seeking to love and serve Him and just needed a couple of issues clarified. No, these religious hypocrites were trying to get Jesus to say something they could use to discredit Him in the eyes of the people, or to use to either imprison Him or have Him killed. They had long ago ceased any honest effort to comprehend Jesus in light of the Old Testament- they had made their minds up that Jesus was of the devil, and their only focus was to have him thoroughly discredited and then taken out of the way.

The Pharisees were using what is called "Circle Reasoning". Circle Reasoning says that since these people are who they are- therefore- whatever they do and say is "right", and, therefore, anyone who says anything in contradiction to them is automatically "wrong". So "authority" from Circle Reasoning comes from the position or the title that somebody has. And that title or position enables these people to always be "right"- *regardless* of what they are actually doing or saying.

So Circle Reasoning allows people who hold a particular position or a title to live lives that are patently evil and wicked and sinful, yet be looked at as being holy and good. For example, "Circle Reasoning" is what allowed Muhammed to *violate* the Qu-ran and have more wives than anyone else could have. It allowed him to personally murder many hundreds of people and still be regarded as "good" and "holy".

Circle Reasoning allows people to lay claim to be "reformed" and to believe the Doctrines of Grace, and yet live in open violation of the

Grace of God in their daily lives. For many years- Circle Reasoning allowed the pope and other higher ups in the Roman religious organization to commit a whole host of sexual sins and murder Protestants by the tens of millions, and still be regarded as “infallible”¹. And Circle Reasoning allowed these Pharisees to live horribly sinful lives and engage in wanton and blatant acts of wickedness, including rampant divorce and adultery, and still hold sway over the people about matters relating to God.

And so their “authority” was derived from the position they held and *not* from the lives they led. So, while they were the “religious elite” - they were not saved, they were not born again, and their Doctrine was the doctrines of devils. And since Jesus operated entirely *outside* of their authority- they wanted Him to go on record as saying from where His Authority came.

But as we discussed last week- for Jesus to say that He had “**all authority**” was for Him to have “*all Power*” and “*all Right*” to do *everything* and *anything* He wills to do. So Jesus has both the:

- ✓ The Sovereign Ability
- ✓ The Divine Right

... to do whatever He wants with whomever or whatever He wants.

And Jesus has this Absolute Authority because He is God. And even though He is Incarnate, even though He is God come in human flesh, even though He has lowered Himself as a Servant, He still has the Power and the Authority to do precisely what God the Father *wills* for Him to do.

So that means that there are no finite limits to His Power. Nothing that is created can withstand Jesus’ Power. So there are no limits to His Ability or His Rights; they are both “absolute”. The one exception is a “*moral* limitation”. So, because Jesus is God- He does *not* have the Right or the Power to sin, or to think or want or act contrary to His Own Perfect Character and Nature. And because Jesus is God- He would never want to do this.

But other than that- there are no limits also to Jesus’ Rights or Ability. He has both the Right and the Ability to do *everything* He wills

¹ A recent study (2006) from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill puts the number at 50 million.
www.cs.unc.edu/~plaisted/estimates.doc

to do- and everything Jesus wills to do- is *always* in perfect harmony with the Father.

Therefore- and this is a very important point – therefore- Jesus *never*- in His earthly life- asked *permission* to do anything. Never. He *never* sought permission from any of the normal channels in His Life and Ministry. Other than His Own Father- there was no one to whom Jesus had to go to get permission to do anything. Jesus was accountable only to God, and there were no human intermediaries between Himself and God. In other words- Jesus was answerable only to God. Which means He had total and absolute Authority over every *created* thing in the Universe.

Now that is Jesus. But we are *not* Jesus. We are bond-slaves *of* Jesus. We are *not* God in human flesh- we are just flesh. We are *not* “incarnate”. We are *not* Deity. We are *not* fully God and fully Man in the same body at the same time- without conflict of contradiction- we are just human.

We are sinners- who have been saved by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone. And that means that, unlike Jesus- we always have *three* sources of authority:

1. God
2. Scripture
3. Other people

Jesus had no human intermediaries between Himself and God- but we do. And we *always* do. No human on earth today- operating rightly in Jesus’ Name and for Jesus’ Glory- is accountable *only* to God. That just doesn’t exist. Every human on earth today is accountable to another human or else he is in conflict with God. No human has direct accountability to God only.

The New Testament teaches clearly and repeatedly that those who operate outside of other human authority are “renegades” and “spiritual mercenaries”, and are in violation of the Divine Order that God established when He alone set up the Church. And contrary to popular opinion- the Protestant Reformation did not relieve any of us from being subject to the leaders of the Church.

And so while it is true that the Protestant concept of “The Priesthood of the Believer” *destroyed* the notion that the Church should

have a functioning Priesthood- it is also true that it *emphasized* the Biblical Truth that everything that God does in the earth today- He does through His Church and *not* through "lone rangers" operating on their own. And Christ's Church is set up with qualified Leaders in it that are responsible for the souls of the people.

Now, I fully realize that this means that there are many so-called "para-church" organizations out there that fall under the heading of "spiritual mercenaries". And one of the most glaring discrepancies that many of these organizations have- is that there is no doctrinal creed by which those who are affiliated with them have to adhere. In other words- as these "almost churches, but not quite" organizations grow- they pay less and less attention to doctrinal issues and more and more attention to social and relational issues. And so their doctrinal statement becomes so *generalized* and so *vague* and so *benign* that Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims and even agnostics can agree to it. So if a man is good in business- he can be on "the board" of many of these "para-church" ministries- *regardless* of whether he is even saved or not, and regardless of how he believes that lost people are saved. And that means that *regardless* of whatever "good" or "noble" things that organization may be doing- they are also in rebellion to the Word of God.

But that is *not* how the Church of Jesus operates. In the Church- Doctrine is *everything*. In the Church- *what* we believe and *why* we believe it- is *paramount*. In the Church that Jesus is building- we are on a mission to become *more* Biblical- not less; we are on a journey together to become *less* worldly- not more. And we are becoming *less* individualistic as we continually strive to be more conformed to the Image of our Lord and Savior- Jesus Christ.

So, for example, every single leader in the true Church of God must really be saved or he can't lead. And he must *demonstrate* that his Salvation is real by pursuing Biblical Holiness- not just on Sundays- but in his daily life. I would rather have a poor and uneducated man- who trembles at God's Word, and is godly, in leadership in this Church than the smartest man in the room who doesn't treasure Jesus Christ. So brainpower and financial wherewithal and social status and personal prestige and leadership traits are way down the list of important qualities when choosing a leader for God's House.

We're looking for things like "brokenness" and "devotion to the Truth", a "genuine love of God's people", a "willingness to serve- not *be* served"- and a passion to know God and enjoy Him forever- things that accompany *genuine* Salvation- rather than just getting a famous, successful man and sticking him in there. And that is *why* it takes a lot longer to pick leaders *here* than out in the world.

And so *our* "authority" lies in being in accord- *both* with God's Word *and* the other leaders of the Church. And so every leader in God's House is accountable to every other godly leader. And so *part* of the Authority we have is derived from those other leaders. And the other sources, of course, are God and His Word.

So the only "authority" that Christians can ever have is *always* deflected *away* from our position or title, and is based only on how accurately and faithfully we preach and teach sacred Scripture, and how godly we live our daily lives- all to the Glory of God.

So all truly godly people derive their authority *not* from their *position*, but from who they really are, and who they really are in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, for example, in the case of Pastors, Elders, and Deacons- which are the only three Leadership positions in the Bible- (Deacons are godly "servants" of the Church but have no ruling or governing authority) who we are- is we are wicked sinners who have been graced by God to be radically and eternally transformed by the sovereign Work of God alone that He did through our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. And we have been called by God to humbly and joyfully serve God and the people by obeying what the Apostle Paul told Timothy in **2Timothy 2:15**:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

So I am authorized to tell you everything that God's Word says- "accurately handled"- but nothing more. And the only way I know *how* to "accurately handle the Word of Truth" is for me to spend time with it to the point where I am what Paul called a "workman". which means a "skilled craftsman".

So, God the Holy Spirit moved upon the Apostle Paul to tell *all* leaders of the Christian Church that they are to "**be diligent**", which *means* they are to set aside dedicated, consistent, and consecrated times

of uninterrupted prayer and study, begging God that we can “**present ourselves to God**”, not Man, as a “skilled craftsman” as opposed to a “young apprentice”.

And we are to do this so that we will not be “**ashamed**”. Now the Greek word here that was translated into English as “ashamed” doesn’t mean “embarrassed”; it means *condemned*. So we are condemned by God as leaders if we do *not* study, if we do *not* pray, if we do *not* beg God for the anointing and the unction to become skilled craftsmen of the Word of God. And then Paul went on to say that the fruit of this would be that we would handle the Word of Truth “**accurately**”, as opposed to inaccurately; accurately as opposed to haphazardly; accurately as opposed to flippantly; accurately as opposed to just making it up.

So for example, even though I am a sinner myself, I am authorized to stand up here and tell you that all sexual perversion will damn your soul to hell-*regardless* of whether that is your inherent inclination or not. And it doesn’t matter if my country has *legalized* sexual perversity or normalized it, God has already spoken. And I am also authorized to tell you that if you will forsake your sin and trust in the finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, then all of your sins will be forgiven you and you will spend eternity in heaven with God, *regardless* of how evil you have been.

And I can say both of those things, not because my *position* enables me to, but because that is the accurate handling of the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of the living God. And so my authority comes from me being in accord with the Book- and *not* my position. But in addition to that I can say both of those things in *this* Church- because those two men sitting right there, along with all of *you*- have given me the *authority* to say that in *this* Church.

We must understand, dear friends, that the Pastor is *not* the CEO of the corporation called “The Church”. And we, who stand in leadership in the House of God are *not* the “new professionals”. Make no mistake about this, the people of the modern Church are being killed by the “professionalization” of the Ministry. And that is *exactly* what is going on. The Church has no need for slick “performers” with clever slogans and catchy quips. We do not need men who have engaging and outgoing personalities that can “entertain” lukewarm and unsaved attendees.

The Church desperately needs men who are broken and who weep over the sins of God's people; men who have been literally consumed with a vision of Jesus Christ in His Glory. We don't need men who share "moral tales" about how "good" people can become "better" people; we need men who thunder God's Truth about how wicked sinners can be born again and be holy. We don't need "professional talkers"; we need slaves of Jesus Christ who speak *prophetically* and who unashamedly *herald* the Doctrines of Grace from a heart that has been *ruined* by the radical Love of a Man; Who lived and died and rose again.

Because there is no "*professional* hungering and thirsting after Righteousness". There is no "*professional* panting after God". There is no "*professional* childlikeness".

Too many pulpits of the modern Church are filled with politics and social issues and moral pronouncements, but they are *not* filled with God. Churches today teach us how to balance our checkbooks and how to lose weight and how to maximize productivity, but they are not teaching us about God and the *particularities* of His Glory, and so we are left with very general and very vague *generalities* about God that leave our heads empty of the infinite Majesty and Worth and Awe of the spectacular Glory of God.

But I cry to you that until we are so overwhelmed with all of the *particularities* of God's Glory to the point where we thunder it from our pulpits and are consumed by it in our own daily lives, until we make God to be so magnificently attractive in all of His various Attributes, *none* of our marriages and *none* of our businesses and *none* of our lives will be lived to the Glory of God! And please hear me when I tell you that the very *epitome* of the immeasurable Worth of God's Glory is found in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that is why Jesus was not under any *human* authority like I am. Jesus actually had what so many spiritual mercenaries lay claim to today; He was answerable *only* to God and not to *any* Man. And that is because only Jesus was *perfectly* obedient to God the Father, and only Jesus was *perfectly* led by God the Holy Spirit. Everybody else *isn't*, and that is *why* every other human is not only answerable to God, but we are also answerable to other human beings, or else we are rebels.

And this is important to understand because you will now comprehend *why* Jesus was so hostile toward the Pharisees. Jesus

never minced any words with these religious hypocrites. Jesus condemned these men *personally* along with their false religion. And He condemned them *clearly* and *repeatedly*- *using as many adjectives as you can find!* In fact, these men represented the only group on earth that Jesus never said anything good about. And so Jesus condemned these guys *publicly* and insulted them to their face. And to add insult to injury, Jesus condemned them at the very point of what they valued the most and what they held to be the most sacred. These men were more wrong about more eternal matters than anybody else on earth.

For example, they were *absolutely* wrong about Salvation. They were *totally* wrong about Holiness. They were *completely* wrong about Worship. They couldn't have been more wrong because they had completely missed the entire point of 39 inspired Books. So that is *why* these men tithed their seeds but didn't love God. That is *why* they fastidiously washed their hands while their hearts were black as night. And that is *why* they prayed long public prayers but didn't know the God they prayed to.

And so because Jesus knew their hearts and knew that they were not asking Him about His Authority because they honestly wanted to understand. Jesus answered their question with another question in verses 3-4:

Luke 20:3b-4

3 ...I will also ask you a question, and you tell Me:

4 Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?

And this put these men in a quandary because two things were true:

- ✓ They feared the people more than they feared God
- ✓ They refused to accept John's Baptism

And so they answered Jesus in verse 7 that:

Luke 20:7

... they did not know where *it came from*.

... which was a "non-answer". And *that* is why Jesus said in verse 8:

Luke 20:8b

... Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

... and then on the heels of this- Jesus launches into the Parable of the Vineyard. And so we see that this Parable is simply another way for Jesus to explain His Divine Authority.

Now, before we go through this Parable- *expositionally*- so we can get it "right"- I want to spend some time telling you the *wrong* way to understand this Parable. And the key to doing that lies in understanding verse 13 that says:

Luke 20:13

The owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.'

Now we must first understand that the Owner of the Vineyard is God. And most people would agree with that. But then many of them will go on to *wrongly* assume that when the "Owner of the Vineyard" said:

... What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.

... that this somehow means that God really doesn't know any more about the future than we do. That the fact that the Owner here asks the question, "**What shall I do?**", and then used the word "**perhaps**", that this means that this "sending" of the Owner's Son to the Vineyard was merely an "effort" by God to try to correct the problem of the people of the vineyard not receiving the others, and that God here is "hoping" and "wishing" that the people of the vineyard will receive His Son- but He's really not sure what will happen, and so He can only try and then wait and see what happens, just like everybody else.

And even over in the "sister Passage" about this same Parable over in **Mark 12**- Jesus quotes the Owner of the Vineyard as saying:

Mark 12:6b

... They will respect my son.

... which again sounds like God, Who is represented by the Owner, actually thinks His Son will *not* be killed but will be well received. And, of course, this line of reasoning is the result of very poor comprehension of the Word of God that emphasizes things that should *not* be emphasized, while *excluding* very important parts that should be emphasized.

The idea that God doesn't know any more about the future than we do is a heresy called "Open Theism". And it is the logical conclusion of believing that human beings have what is called "Free Will". Now you may remember that Free Will is the *misguided* notion that the only way that we can be held accountable for our actions is if we have the ability to freely choose whatever it is that we believe and do. And, of course, the Bible doesn't teach Free Will- precisely because it is *not* the only way that humans can be held accountable to God. We are fully accountable for what we believe and do. And so, God will judge us if we do not believe and do the "right" things. But that is *not* the full story.

Because we are fallen creatures- we are *incapable* of voluntarily choosing to love and serve God. And that is because our choices are *predicated* on what we love. So we choose what we "love" and what we "want". So our choices are not "free"- they are not autonomous- but are based on whatever it is that we love and want.

But why do we "love" what we "love"? Why do we "want" what we "want"? What is it *in* us that makes us "love" or "want" something? The Bible teaches that it is our nature.

And the nature of a lost person is "fallen" and "corrupt". And that means that what a lost person loves and wants is "sin" and "self". And his choices reflect that. And so our choices are not "free" but are predicated on our loves and wants. But our loves and wants are not free either- but are based on our nature. And the nature of a lost person is fallen and corrupt and rebellious to God and the things of God.

And so, in our fallen condition – *nobody* normally or naturally loves or wants God. So if *anybody* in that lost condition is going to love and serve God at all- then God has to sovereignly *intervene* in that person's life to *give* that person a new nature- one that loves God and the things of God

And so that new nature provides new loves, and those new loves produce new choices- choices that love God. So left to *ourselves*- in our lost condition- we would *never* love God. And so, in His great Mercy,

God has chosen to fix that problem for *some* of the unworthy sinners. And so He sovereignly moves to forcefully and decisively *transform* the nature of the lost person- so that he will love God and the things of God. And then with those new loves that are produced by that new nature- that lost person is then "able" to hear the Gospel and believe the Gospel, and with those new loves- the lost person is "willing" to choose to repent and to love and serve God. But all of this occurs only because God did what He did- *first*. Other than that- *nobody* is ever convicted of a single sin, nobody believes, and nobody is saved.

And so our love for God is *not* something that is inherit *within* us. We do not possess a love for God or the things of God naturally within ourselves. No, that kind of love has to be *given* to us. And that is why the Apostle John said in **1 John 4:19**:

We love [God and the things of God and God's people], because He first loved us.

... and the sovereign "giving" of this new love is what is called being "Born Again."

Open Theism denies all this and is a blasphemous attack against the Sovereignty of God by *limiting* God's *Omniscience*. The Bible boldly declares that God knows everything about everything, and that God doesn't simply "know" what is going to happen in the future- but that He is also *Effectual*- guaranteeing that His Will is always carried out- *exactly* how God planned. So the one, true, living God of the Bible is *never* frustrated and always does what is His Will.

We must remember that it was not God's Will for humanity, in general, to believe in Jesus and to love and honor Him. It was God's Will for Jesus to be rejected and to be scorned and betrayed and falsely accused and go on trial and be beaten and die a horrible death. And so as Jesus tells this Story- we must keep the overall Truth of the New Testament in mind. To suggest as the Open Theists do- that God didn't know any more about the future than we do and that is why the Owner of the Vineyard spoke like this- would be to ignore and contradict the basic Truth of the entire New Testament that God sent the Son into the world to die (**John 10:18; Isaiah 53:10**).

Okay- but if we are not supposed to think this way- then what is Jesus talking about here. And to answer that question- we need to look

to the Puritans, because in God's Providence- we are reading this month- a book by one of the most important figures in all Puritan history- right at the same time- we are going over this Parable here in **Luke 20**.

Now John Owen is perhaps one of the most important Biblical scholars the English speaking world has ever or will ever produce. And John Owen understood something that will help us with this Parable. In the book we are reading this month- "The Spirit and the Church" that Owen wrote back in the late 17th Century- Owen wrote about the distinction between "Revelation" and "Illumination".

While both are sovereign Works of God the Holy Spirit to Man- there is a distinction:

- **Revelation**- the original giving of Divine Truth to Man
- **Illumination**- the understanding of Divine Truth that has already been given

And so Revelation would be "New Truth", while Illumination would be the understanding of Truth that has already been given and that has already been confirmed as being Divine through signs, wonders, miracles, and various gifts of the Holy Spirit. So what many people today call "Revelation" is actually God giving an understanding of the Truth that God originally gave- many thousands of years ago.

Now I will be faithful to tell you that Revelation from God to Man is over. And it is over- *not* because something happened to God- but because the Revelation that God gave to Man through the superior New Covenant is finished; it is completed and finalized. There is no more Truth for God to reveal to us. And so we cannot trust anyone who says they have been given new or fresh Revelation from God.

So our struggle today is *not* to receive new Information from God- but, by God's help, to rightly understand the already given Information and then obey it. And so while it is true that we are to study to show ourselves approved unto God as a workman that doesn't need to be condemned- but accurately handling the Word of Truth- any time we actually do that- it is a Work of God the Holy Spirit that has illuminated our minds and hearts to comprehend the Word of God. And that is why Owen said:

“Supernatural Illumination refers to what has already been revealed.”²

And then Owen went on to show just how God the Holy Spirit works within us to teach us what the Scriptures mean, when he said:

“In all His Revelations, God required men to exercise faith, conscience, obedience, and reason towards them... which are in effect also Works of the Spirit as well”³

So we should take Owen’s counsel in trying to comprehend what Jesus is teaching here in this Parable. And applying this technique to the Bible- we see that Jesus spoke in Parables so that only the elect could hear, and what they could hear would be in plain sight and not hidden at all.

So we have to understand that every detail of a Parable should not be pressed to have a counterpart in the “general point” the Parable is making. And to illustrate what I am saying look at how this parable ends in verses 17-18:

Luke 20:17c-18

17 ... THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone'?

18 "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."

... and Jesus said in the *first* part of verse 17:

Luke 20:17b

... What then is this that is written ...

Or as **Mark 12:10** says:

Mark 12:10a

Have you not even read this Scripture...

... which is referring to **Psalms 118** that says:

² Owen John; *The Spirit and the Church*; The Works of John Owen; Banner of Truth; Page 2

³ Ibid page 3 and following

Psalms 118:22&23

22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner *stone*.

23 This is the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.

Now the Hebrew word that was translated here as “**marvelous**” has to do with *both the eye and mental and spiritual contemplation*. So marvelous is not necessarily something that is exciting or what most people would call “good”, but is something that is odd and something that requires you to see or contemplate before you can understand it. So something that is “marvelous” is something that “marvels” you, or *something to which you gape at in stunned silence as you see it unfold before your eyes*, and something you would have to contemplate using both your mental and spiritual faculties.

So, in other words, Jesus points out that already in **Psalm 118**, written almost 1,000 years before the sending of the Son, that God's Plan was already laid out: The Messiah will be rejected, killed, and raised from the dead. And this is all “the Lord's doing.” That will marvel us, or that is so odd and so out of the ordinary that it will cause us to stand in stunned silence as we gape at it, and something that will require us to use both our mental and spiritual faculties to try to comprehend.

And that means that Open Theism is a *terrible* explanation for what is going on here. And that also means that the Death of the Son was not a surprise to God. It was His pre-determined Plan. It was God's Will.

So in the Parable itself we are told *not* to construe the Owner's words, “**What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.**”, as part of the way God is being represented. It isn't. That is something that a *human* owner might say- but not a sovereignly Omniscient God. Therefore- these words are completely *incidental* to the larger point of the Parable.

What God said, in fact, was: “These ‘builders’- the ones who were the most likely candidates to ‘build’- these Pharisees- will utterly reject My Son- and in their rejection- my Word will be fulfilled- as I will make Him both Lord and Christ.”

So the Owner of the vineyard had sent servants to get fruit from the tenants. And they had beaten some and killed others. Then the

Owner sent His son- but they beat Him, too, and cast Him out and killed Him.

So the meaning of the Parable is that God owns the vineyard of Israel. And Israel is *supposed* to bear the fruit of worship and obedience. And over the centuries- God sent prophets and wise men to gather this fruit. And finally He sent His Son. But, the leaders of Israel rebel. They will give no fruit. And they kill the Son of God.

Then comes the highlight of the entire Parable- beginning with the last part of verse 15:

Luke 20:15-18

15 ... What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them?

16 "He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." When they heard it, they said, "May it never be!"

17 But Jesus looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: '*THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone*'?"

18 "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."

Now let's apply the concept of "Sola Scriptura" to this Parable by allowing God's Word to interpret God's Word. And to do that- we can go straight to the Divine Interpretation of the Apostle Peter in **The Acts 4:8–12**. Now remember, part of the capacity of Apostles was that God enabled them to correctly interpret the Old Testament Scriptures. And so Peter and John had just been arrested for causing a stir by healing a man and teaching about the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead (**4:2–3**). And the next day the Jewish leaders (the very ones who had condemned Jesus here in **Luke 20**) asked the Apostles by what "power" and "authority" *they* were acting- just like they questioned Jesus.

And Peter answers, and his answer is a Divine Interpretation of Jesus' Word about the rejected Stone. Read with me- starting at the end of verse 8:

The Acts 4:8b-12

8 ... Rulers and elders of the people,

9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well,

10 let it be known to all of you and 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* this man stands here before you in good health.

11 "He is the *STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED* by you, *THE BUILDERS*, *but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone*.

12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Now notice Peter's interpretation, one part at a time.

- ✓ Verse 10: the "Stone" is Jesus Christ of Nazareth.
- ✓ Verse 8: the "builders" are the rulers and elders of the people
- ✓ Verse 10: the "rejection of the stone" was the Crucifixion of Jesus.
- ✓ Verse 10: the "elevation of the stone to the head of the corner" was the Resurrection of Jesus.
- ✓ Verse 12: the implication of this new position at the head is that there is Salvation in no other.

And this is the same point Paul made at the Areopagus; the Resurrection declares that Jesus is the Son of God in Power, and all must repent from other gods and seek Salvation in Him alone.

Now that is Peter's interpretation of the Words of Jesus in **Luke 20:17-18**. So now we will be able on the basis of this interpretation to go back to Jesus' Word and fix our gaze on four things that should make us "marvel".

1. Jesus' Prediction

First, let us marvel at the fact that Jesus predicts His Own Resurrection before it happens. And He had done this before this moment, and He would do it again. Sometimes He made it plain, for example, when He said: "**After I am raised up I will go before you into Galilee**" (**Mark 14:28**; cf. **Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; 14:25**). But usually he spoke of it *indirectly*, for example, when He said: "**Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up**" (**John 2:19; Mark 14:58; 15:29; Matthew 26:61**), or "**No sign will be given to this generation except the sign of Jonah**" (**Matthew 16:4; 12:39**; cf. **12:41**). Jesus often spoke only for those who had ears to hear.

And the reason I point out the fact that Jesus predicted His Own Resurrection is to sow a seed in your mind that I don't have time to develop today. And that seed is simply that it is *impossible* to admire Jesus as a wise and loving Teacher while then *rejecting* Him as your risen and living Master. And it's *impossible* because if Jesus isn't the risen Master, then He was deluded or deceptive in both His Life and Teaching, and so shouldn't be admired.

Jesus built His entire Life around a Self-understanding that included His Own Resurrection. So if He didn't rise, He is to be pitied as a teacher and not admired at all.

But someone may say, *"Aren't you assuming that He said everything the Gospels said that He did? Wouldn't the skeptic who rejects the Resurrection but admires Jesus say that the early church just made up those sayings to make it look like Jesus expected His Own Resurrection?"*

And the answer to that question is that no matter how much of the Gospels you try to strip away as later additions- you never wind up with a mere Man. Jesus' claims to Authority and Power are so woven through His Words and Deeds that critics are dreaming when they think they can peel the onion of supernatural tradition down to the natural core of a mere man. That kind of Jesus vanishes under clear scrutiny. Because a mere, natural man named Jesus with a noble view of love never existed. The Jesus of history knew He was no ordinary Man, and we would do well to marvel about that part of His Self-understanding was the assurance that He would rise from the dead. So we should marvel that Jesus predicted His Resurrection before it happened.

2. The Builders' Blindness

Second, let us marvel at the blindness of the builders. "The very stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner." It is an amazing thing that the people who should know stones best did not recognize the best Stone. **Mark 6:6** says:

"Jesus marveled because of their unbelief."

He said to Nicodemus- one of the "builders":

"Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand this?"

Jesus was astonished at the blindness of those who should have been the first to recognize Him from their knowledge of the Old Testament.

But while we marvel at this- let us learn a great lesson. Even today there is no guarantee that the "builders"—the religious experts, the university theologians, the clergy of our day—will recognize the Stone either.

Just a few years ago- a sixty-year old theology professor at the University of Leeds in England was appointed Bishop of Durham. And during that process he announced that the Resurrection of Jesus was a "conjuring trick with bones." So here is another "builder" who still is rejecting the Stone.

Now why should we be vigilant about such things in our own churches and colleges and seminaries?

One is that the bishop's words reached Muslims in Sri Lanka, half way around the world. Immediately they began aggressive visitation campaigns to Christians saying that there is no reason for conflict any more since Christians and Muslims both agree now that Jesus was merely a Prophet to be honored, not the Son of God to be worshiped.

One Anglican rector in Sri Lanka said:

"They are killing us with our bishop's own words."

Dear friends, the "builders" are *still* rejecting the Corner Stone, and in many churches the walls and the mission are in disarray.

The other reason for us to be vigilant as we marvel at the blindness of the builders is something that Iain Murray said recently. He said:

"The uproar over the bishop is puzzling since he has been teaching these things to preparing ministers in the university for years and probably doing more harm there than he can do now that he is a public figure and his cards are on the table."

So let us marvel at the blindness of the builders. And let us remember that academic stature has never been a guarantee of religious insight. And let us be vigilant and examine our own Church leaders- the Pastor, the Elders and all proposed Deacons- and all Teachers- and let us examine them carefully to see if they know and accept the Stone which many builders have rejected.

3. The Rejected Stone Now the Head Stone

Third, let us marvel that the Stone which is now at the Head of the corner is the very Stone that was once rejected.

Or, to take the imagery away- we must marvel that it is a real Man Who now reigns at the Right Hand of God. Yes, He is more than a Man. He is the Son of God in Power. But the astonishing thing that we gaze at now is this: God the Son came into the world and clothed himself with a human nature in order to die for sinners like you and me. A divine nature and a human nature came together in one Person. And when that Person rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to take his place as the Head of the Church and the King of the world, at the Right Hand of God the Father Almighty, it was a Man Who went into Heaven. He was one of us then and He is the same man reigning in heaven today Who ate and drank and taught and healed and suffered on earth. The very Stone which the builders rejected, THIS One is now Head of the corner.

In **Luke 24:36–43** the risen Christ appeared to the Apostles. They were so amazed that they thought they were seeing a ghost. So Jesus says,

38 ... "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

39 "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

41 While they still could not believe *it* because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"

42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish;

43 and He took it and ate *it* before them.

The risen Christ Who reigns in Heaven today and intercedes for us with the Father is a rejected Stone! He has flesh and bones! He is one of us. And this Truth contains good news for now and good news for later. For now it means this:

Hebrews 4:15-16

15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.

16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

For He, too, is a rejected Stone with pierced Hands and flesh and bone! But, not only that. This Truth is also good news for the future. Get every ethereal, ghost-like conception of the coming kingdom out of your head. The God-Man is not going to rule over invisible spirits and ghosts.

Romans 8:11

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

We will eat broiled fish in the kingdom! We will hold it in our physical hands and stand on our feet. And there will be no more wheel chairs or crutches or cancer or paralysis or leukemia or allergies or arthritis any more. For we will bear the image of the Son of God, and we will see him and touch him and marvel at him forever and ever, because the divine stone which is now at the head of the corner is the very same human stone that was once rejected.

4. What It Means to Be the Head of the Corner

Fourth, let us marvel at what it means to be the Head of the Corner.

And Paul saw it perhaps more clearly than anyone, and said,

Ephesians 1:20-23

20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,
21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.
22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,
23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

And that is why Jesus could say:

Matthew 28:18b

... All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

And that is why Paul could preach in Athens with unwavering authority:

The Acts 17:31

because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Therefore (as we return to Peter's interpretation of our text),

The Acts 4:12

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

O, I beg you- don't be like those builders this morning! Do not reject Jesus Christ. Do not stumble over this rejected stone. The very Stone which the builders rejected has become the Head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing and may it be marvelous in your eyes!

Amen. Let's pray

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.