

October 7, 2012 by Steve Brandon



Rejecting Authority

Mark 11:27-12:12

1. Questioning the Authority (11:27-33)

2. Rejecting the Stone (12:1-12)

One of the foundational truths of the Bible is that God has complete authority over us. He is the creator. We are the creature. To use the language of Psalm 100:3, "It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves."

As a result of this, He is in complete charge of this universe. And, we owe to Him our complete submission. We are created to be His servants -- created to do His will. Revelation 4:11 says, "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created." So, "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD" (Ps. 150:6).

To some, this thought may seem to be a bit scary. What are we? Pawns and peons in this universe, created merely to carry out the cruel plans of a despot? Nothing could be further from the truth, because the Lord is good. And such submission that He requires of us is a good thing. In other words, God always has our ultimate best in mind. It goes best with us when we submit to Him.

Parents know this. We have the best for our children in mind. It goes best with them when they submit to us. This is Paul's point in Ephesians 6: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:1-3). And yet, sadly, due to our sin, our nature is to be independent. We have a strong tendency to resist God's authority upon our lives, because we want to do our own thing instead.

Really, this is the dividing line between Christians and Non-Christians. Christians are those who have bowed the knee to the sovereign Lord, submitting their will to His will, believing in Jesus, who died for our sins upon the cross, and seeking to honor Him with all of our lives. Non-Christians, on the other hand, haven't bowed their knee to the sovereign Lord. Instead, they have maintained their rebellion. They have not believed in the Lord. They continue to walk in their own independence.

In our text this morning, we will see the religious authorities during the days of Jesus rejecting His authority over their lives. Thereby, they give us a picture of what it is like to reject Jesus. The teaching in our text today comes primary through the path of negative example. We will look at those who are "Rejecting Jesus." The call this morning is not to be like them.

We'll begin this morning in Mark, chapter 11, verse 27, and carrying through until chapter 12, verse 12.

Mark 11:27-12:12

They came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him, and began saying to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?" And Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me." They began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Then why did you not believe him?' But shall we say, 'From men?'"—they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet. Answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

And He began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard and put a wall around it, and dug a vat under the wine press and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so with many others, beating some and killing others. He had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. Have you not even read this Scripture:

"The stone which the builders rejected,
This became the chief corner stone;
This came about from the Lord,
And it is marvelous in our eyes?"

And they were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And so they left Him and went away.

We see here two scenes. The first involves the religious leaders bringing their attack upon Jesus. The second involves Jesus returning the favor.

Let's look at my first point:

1. Questioning the Authority (11:27-33)

In verse 27, we see Jesus coming "again" to Jerusalem. During His passion week, Jesus would spend his days in Jerusalem. He would spend his evenings in Bethany (Mark 11:11, 19). Mark 11 describes the day Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, with the crowds spreading their coats and leafy branches in the road for Him (11:8). This is often called, "Palm Sunday." Verse 11 reads, "Jesus entered Jerusalem and came into the temple; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late." So, He spent Sunday night in Bethany.

On Monday morning, Jesus arose with His disciples and returned to the temple. On the way, Jesus cursed the fig tree (11:12-14). He then overturned the tables of the money changers in the temple and drove them out (11:15-18). In verse 19, we read, "When evening came, they would go out of the city." So, He spent Monday night in Bethany.

On Tuesday morning, Peter noticed the fig tree that Jesus had cursed. Jesus responded by telling him to "Believe, Pray and Forgive" (as we looked at last week).

And here in verse 27, we find Jesus coming into the temple area. And he encounters the religious leaders of the day. They are identified as "the chief priests and the scribes and the elders." The priests were those in charge of the temple activities. The scribes were the experts in the law. The elders were the community leaders.

And they came to Jesus, asking Him a question. "By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?" (Mark 11:28). They ask two questions, both of which have to do with the events of the previous day in the temple when Jesus drove out "those who were buying and selling in the temple," overturning the tables of the money changers (verse 15). Both of these questions are really the same question. They have to do with authority. "Where did you get your authority to come into the temple and disrupt everything?"

It's a reasonable question. Suppose there's a banquet at Cliffbreakers. Hundreds of people have come to enjoy the feast. And I enter into the kitchen and begin to disrupt everything. I take the plates that have been prepared and heaping with food and begin to push them onto the floor. I overturn the salad bowls and throw the bread onto the floor. And then, I announce to the kitchen staff, "Ladies and Gentleman, I have an announcement to make. We have just discovered that this food has been poisoned. Do not serve this food to these people. Send them home!"

You might reasonably ask me, "Where did you get your authority to come into our kitchen and disrupt everything? We have hundreds of hungry people waiting for their food, and you come in here and destroy their food?"

And if I was simply a guy off the street with no substance to my claim, the management at Cliff Breakers would rightly be angry with me for disturbing their business in such a way. Oh, but if I were the owner of the place, it would be a different story. It's my business. And I can do anything that I want with my business. It may be bad business, but I have the right to do so.

And that's what the religious leaders were asking Jesus. "What sort of authority do you have?"

Only, this question really wasn't such a question at all. These men knew all about Jesus. They knew that He had no authority to do such things. In order to make any changes to the temple, of course you would need to go through the existing authority structures. But, Jesus hadn't been educated in the Rabbinical schools. Nor was Jesus a priest. Jesus was a self-proclaimed expert in the law, who came in and disrupted the worship in the temple. And these religious leaders were not happy. In fact, Mark's first comment after Jesus cleansed the temple, is found in verse 18, "The chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him." This question was all a part of their ploy to destroy Jesus, confronting Jesus about what He did in the temple.

Now, in many ways, this question wasn't even a question. It was more like a rebuke. "Hey, Jesus! We are in charge of the temple. Not you. You have no right to come and do what you did in the temple. What you did was wrong and you know it. You need to give an account for your actions."

Jesus discerned their malice and responded to their question with a question. He said (verse 29), ...

Mark 11:29-30

And Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men? Answer Me."

This was a great question. These religious leaders brought up the issue of authority. And so, Jesus brought up the same issue; this time with reference to John the Baptist.

John's ministry was a bit like the ministry of Jesus. John said some pretty bold things. He upset the Pharisees, calling them a "brood of vipers" (Luke 3:7). He told the religious people to repent (Luke 3:8). Jesus was the same way. He said some bold things and upset the

Pharisees. He called them "hypocrites" (Mark 7:6) and cast his woes upon those who didn't believe in Him (Matt. 11:2-24).

And so, determining the source of the authority of John the Baptist, would be a good question. Rather than answering the question, the Pharisees have a meeting.

Mark 11:31-32

They began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Then why did you not believe him?' But shall we say, 'From men?'"—they were afraid of the people, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet.

The reasoning here is really quite simple. They reasoned how they were doomed with either answer. If they say that John's baptism was from heaven, they show themselves to be unbelievers, for they neither believed John, nor Jesus. If they say that John's baptism was from men, they risk going against the public opinion of the day.

I want for you to think with me for a few moments of what these religious leaders are doing. They aren't talking with each other in an effort to find an answer to Jesus' question. Rather, they are talking with each other to see what will happen if they give certain answers to certain questions. That's not the way to answers to theological questions. That's the way a politician might answer questions, but not the way for theologians.

I love what John Piper said about this. He said: "The elders and chief priests do not use their minds to formulate a true answer to Jesus' question. How do they use their minds? They reason carefully: "If we say this, then such and such will happen. And if we say that, then such and such will happen." They are reasoning carefully. Why? Because the truth is at stake? No, because their skin is at stake. They don't want to be shamed, and they don't want to be harmed." [\[1\]](#)

And so, that's why they said to Jesus, ...

Mark 11:33

... "We do not know."

Notice what is wrapped up in that answer. Their fear of man trumped their fear of God. They were more fearful of people and how others might respond to them, than they were fearful of getting such an important question wrong.

Future destinies lie upon the answer to this question: "Where did Jesus get His authority?" If Jesus received His authority from God, then we must fear Him; we must believe Him; we must obey Him. If the authority of Jesus was only a human authority, then we have no need to fear. We aren't compelled to believe Him, nor obey Him.

But, these religious leaders were unwilling to face the truth about Jesus. So, Jesus refuses to deal with them. He said to them, ...

Mark 11:33

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

Jesus wasn't into playing games -- especially with those who intent to destroy Him (Mark 3:6; 11:18). If they weren't willing to take a stand, then Jesus wasn't willing to answer their question.

I believe that the same thing happens today with many people. There are many today who are more interested in what the outcome of their beliefs might be, rather than holding to their beliefs regardless of the implications. People are scared of how their relatives might react if they would place their trust in Jesus. People are concerned of how things will work out at their jobs if they would believe in Jesus. People are fearful about their reputations if they would believe in Jesus. People are troubled what their friends might say if they followed Jesus.

As a result, they stay on the fence. Like these religious leaders, they say, "I just don't know about Jesus." Just as Jesus gave these religious leaders no answer, I doubt that Jesus will give modern day skeptics much of an answer either.

What about you? Are you questioning the authority of Jesus? Or, does Jesus have your full attention?

There are consequences to following Jesus. Jesus didn't paint a pretty picture of those who would follow after Him. Mark 8:34 says, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." In other words, the follower of Jesus must be willing to die. Die to self. Die to family. Die to reputation. Die to friends.

In Pilgrim's Progress, when Christian left the city of Destruction to head for the Celestial city, the entire city thought that he had gone mad. They tried to persuade him to come back. But, Christian was driven by the joys that awaited him in the Celestial city. And in following Christ, there are blessings as well. We read a few weeks ago in Mark 10:29-30, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life."

Are you following Jesus? Have you bowed the knee to Him? Or, are you still questioning His authority over your life? This is the divide between Christians and non-Christians.

Let's move to my second point. We have seen the religious leaders Questioning the Authority (11:27-33) Secondly, we see them ...
2. Rejecting the Stone (12:1-12)

This comes in chapter 12. We read in verse 1, ...

Mark 12:1
And He began to speak to them in parables.

One of these parables is recorded for us in verses 1-11 (see above). Here's the first verse:

Mark 12:1
And He began to speak to them in parables, "A man planted a vineyard and put a wall around it, and dug a vat under the wine press and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey."

Jesus introduces the first character as a man who "planted a vineyard" (verse 1). The land of Israel is covered with vineyards, as the climate is perfect for growing grapes. The Jews who heard Jesus describe the planting of this vineyard, would relate very well. I don't think that it is too difficult for us to understand. We drive but a few minutes and we can see the farmers caring for their fields in much the same way that the vine growers of Jesus' day would have done for their vines.

In planting the vineyard, he certainly took some effort to prepare the soil. If this particular piece of land hadn't yet been cultivated, this may have required some intense labor, removing any large rocks, cutting down any weeds that happened to be growing there, and cultivating the hard soil for the first time. In verse 1, we read that he "put a wall around it." This wouldn't have been a cheap enterprise for the owner. To build a wall would require much labor. This wall would have protected his vines from any animals that might attempt to come and enjoy the crop for themselves.

Furthermore, we read that he "dug a vat under the wine press" (verse 1). This action certainly speaks to his expectation that fruit would come from this vineyard. Rather than taking his grapes off to another location, this owner wanted to streamline the process, by pressing the grapes right there within the vineyard.

He also "built a tower" (verse 1). This would have allowed for further care and protection for his vineyard. A tower would enable him (or one of his workers) to watch out for thieves, who might attempt to plunder his vineyard.

In all of this activity, (planting, building a wall, digging a wine press, and building a tower), we see the great care of the landowner to insure that this vineyard would produce fruit. The soil was cultivated. The field was protected by a wall. The wine press was ready for the fruit. It was intended to be a successful and profitable operation for this landowner.

Now, for some reason, once the vineyard was all built, and ready to put forth fruit, the landowner "rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey" (verse 1). We aren't told the purpose of the journey. But, in his absence, this landowner transferred responsibility for the welfare of his vineyard over to these vine-growers. It says here that they "rented it" from him. Such an arrangement isn't so unusual. This takes place today. It is very common for one person to own land, while another agrees to farm the land. In doing so, various arrangements are possible. The land can be rented for a set price each year. Or, the owner and the farmer can split the profits of the crops. In either event, those who rent the vineyard made some type of business agreement to make a return to the owner.

In verse 2, we see the owner expecting to cash in on the produce of the vineyard.

Mark 12:2
At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers.

Surely, this was in accordance with their rental agreement. The owner was surely expecting him to return with some cash in hand. However, such was not the case.

Mark 12:3
They took him, and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

Instead of returning with cash, the man returned with bruises obtained from the beating he received. Verse 4 sees a repeat of what took place in verse 3, ...

Mark 12:4
Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully.

What an awful thing to do. These slaves had been sent by the landowner to collect his share from the vineyard, as had been agreed upon before he left on his journey. These slaves were merely following the requests of their master, who sent them. Rather than being received kindly, they were harshly treated.

One would think that the owner would have had enough sense not to send another slave to collect money. But, he did. Verse 5 tells the result.

Mark 12:5

And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so with many others, beating some and killing others.

We can only imagine the beating that took place. Certainly, wooden sticks or metal rods were used to strike these slaves before they were sent back to the owner with cuts and bruises over their bodies, with stories to tell the owner. Jesus doesn't tell us how they killed these slaves. Perhaps with the sword. Perhaps with stones.

One would think that the owner would have learned his lesson by now, sending many slaves who were beaten and killed. But, according to verse 6, we find out that the owner does an amazing thing.

Mark 12:6

He had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

But, the owner was mistaken. In some ways, such an action borders on being naïve. If they killed several sets of slaves, why would they not kill the son also? But, by sending his son, the landowner is demonstrating his patience with these wicked men. Perhaps he had given them the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps they had beaten and killed the other slaves in thinking that they were deceivers, not having been sent from the landowner. But, when the son arrives, there would be no doubt that he was sent by the landowner.

The results of this visit are given in verses 7 and 8, ...

Mark 12:7-8

But those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard.

Such was the wickedness of these men that they killed the son as well. Then, Jesus asked the question in verse 9, ...

Mark 12:9

What will the owner of the vineyard do?

It's not a mystery what he will do. He will bring these men to justice.

Mark 12:9

... He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others.

This was a well-known imagery in the days of Jesus. It was remarkably similar to the one that the prophet Isaiah had told some 700 years before. In fact, Mark 12:1 is a direct quotation from Isaiah 5:1. As experts in the law, these religious leaders would have understood the similarity. Let me remind you that Isaiah was much more familiar to them than it is to us today. Listen to the parable:

Isaiah 5:1-7

Let me sing now for my well-beloved
A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard.
My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.
He dug it all around, removed its stones,
And planted it with the choicest vine.
And He built a tower in the middle of it
And also hewed out a wine vat in it;
Then He expected it to produce good grapes,
But it produced only worthless ones.
"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
Judge between Me and My vineyard.
"What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it?
Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones?
"So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard:
I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed;
I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.
"I will lay it waste;
It will not be pruned or hoed,
But briars and thorns will come up.
I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it."
For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel
And the men of Judah His delightful plant.

Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed;
For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.

The elements of this parable are exactly like the ones in Jesus' parable. God is the one who planted the vineyard (verse 1). The plants are the people of Israel (verse 7). He expected to see fruit, but didn't (verse 4). And, the end was bad.

In Isaiah's parable, the Lord would come and destroy the vineyard (verse 5). The field would lay uncultivated and weeds would arise (verse 6). And the rain would be withheld, to prevent anything from growing (verse 6). This was prophetic of what would take place in a few years of Isaiah's writing this. Israel had already been destroyed by Assyria. Soon afterwards, Judah, the southern nation, would be taken into captivity in Babylon. Why? Because Israel bore no fruit.

And every one of these religious authorities could have taken a scroll and read the parable for you. They could have interpreted the parable for you. They could have demonstrated from history how it came true -- Israel was fruitless and God destroyed them!

In our text today (Mark 12), Jesus took the motif of Isaiah's parable and updated it with what was taking place in His day. As in Isaiah's parable, the landowner represents God, and the vineyard represents Israel. Jesus adds a few more components to His parable to direct attention away from the lack of fruit in general to the misconduct of the Jewish leaders in particular. The vine-growers represent the religious leaders of Israel. The slaves represent the prophets. The son represents Jesus, Himself.

God had planted and cultivated this nation of Israel. He had protected them from the surrounding nations, as this landowner did in building a wall around the vineyard. He had expected to see fruit from Israel, as this landowner did in digging a wine press within the walls of the vineyard. He had provided a future means of protection, as this landowner did in building a guard tower. God gave the responsibility of spiritual leadership to the religious leaders of Israel, as this landowner rented his vineyard to the vine-growers. God sent His prophets to Israel, as this landowner had sent his slaves to the vine-growers. God sent Jesus to Israel, as this landowner had sent his son to the vine-growers. Even He was rejected.

What would the owner do?

Mark 12:9

... He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others.

The gospel has come to the gentiles! From this parable, there are two main points that we should extract.

First, the kindness of God. From the parable, you get a strong sense that the landowner cared for His vineyard. He went to great extents to see that the vineyard would grow and prosper. And when you take this into history by looking upon the kindness of God to Israel, it is stunning!

In Genesis 12, the nation began with a choice that God made. He chose Abraham to be the father of His chosen nation. A nation whose numbers would be as the numbers of the stars in the sky (Gen. 15:5), or as the sand in the seashore (Gen. 22:17). Through amazing providences, God protected this family from a famine that came upon the land. Though enslaved for some 400 years in Egypt, God blessed them and they multiplied greatly during this time. Furthermore, He delivered them from slavery by such unbelievable displays of His sovereignty that the Jewish people today still remember them (some 4,000 years later) by celebrating the Passover each year. He brought them into the promised land and blessed them abundantly.

And then, in contrast to the kindness of God, you see the rebellion of Israel. And how did they respond? They rebelled. They rebelled. They rebelled.

If you read the book of Judges, you read about how they forsake the Lord again and again and again. Israel was oppressed and afflicted. And then, God raises up a judge to deliver them. They say, "Thank you very much" and soon after forsake the Lord again. And then, God raises up another judge to deliver them. Then, they rebel again.

During the times of the kings, it is the same thing. Some kings are good (like Hezekiah and Josiah) and seek to reform the people. But, many kings are bad, and lead Israel into great sin! Israel was a rebellious nation.

When the Lord sent the prophets, do you know how the people of God responded to them? Jeremiah was beaten and put in stocks (Jeremiah 20:2). He was thrown in prison and had been cast into an empty cistern (Jer. 37, 38).

We are told in 1 Kings 18:4 that Jezebel "destroyed the prophets of the Lord." We don't know how many were killed, but we do know that Obadiah took 100 prophets and hid them and provided food for them. Perhaps Jezebel killed hundreds of prophets.

In 2 Chronicles 24, the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, who told the people, "Thus God has said, 'Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD and do not prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He has also forsaken you.'" What did they do to him? They stoned him to death (2 Chron. 24:21).

It was well known among the people that the Jews were those who persecuted their own prophets. Jesus refers to it in Matthew 23:30. Stephen refers to it in Acts 7:52, saying, "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?" The exception for a prophet was to experience a life of no persecution. And yet, despite their great rebellion, God continued to demonstrate His patience to this rebellious nation by sending them more prophets and more prophets and more prophets. God's relentless grace even borders on naïveté. Why would God

send His servants to be so mistreated. Israel hated them, and beat them and stoned them and killed them.

It was exactly as Jesus described it in His parable. You see the kindness of God on the one hand and you see the rebellion of Israel on the other. Yet, even in their rebellion, the Lord continued to demonstrate His patience to them.

It is the same today. God has been extremely patient with all of us. Today is a day of God's tremendous kindness and patience. If any of us don't believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, who's to blame? It certainly can't be God, who has extended His great patience to us.

The gospel is widely proclaimed in our nation. Churches abound in America. Anyone interested in learning the truth about God can walk into many churches in our land and hear the good news of Jesus Christ. Oh, I admit that in many churches, the gospel has been distorted. But, usually, there is enough light to begin a pursuit of the knowledge of Jesus.

I remember speaking with a college student from another nation who was absolutely astonished at the number of churches that we have here in America. Even Americans are shocked sometimes at the number of churches here in America. I have heard several people who have come to our church building express their astonishment at the number of church buildings nearby our church building. Many churches surround our church building.

Even if people don't come to church, there are always other options for hearing the gospel here in America. Radio, television, internet. Now, admittedly, there is much religious teaching out there that is false. But, there is enough that is true. If you are searching for the true gospel in this nation, you can find it.

God has abounded in kindness to our nation. There is no other nation in the history of the world that has had the Christian heritage that we have had. Many of the early settlers in America left Europe for religious reasons. Many of these people had the exact same theology as we believe at Rock Valley Bible Church. Furthermore, there is no other nation in the history of the world that has been blessed from a material perspective.

And how have we responded as a nation? Just like Israel. We have rebelled. We have rebelled. We have rebelled. You look at our society today and you will see rebellion all over the place. We are becoming increasingly secular. We are becoming increasingly immoral. We are a nation adrift, pursuing our own pleasures, with little regard for God and His word.

If we continue in our rebellion, there will be a day when God's patience runs out. We will have no one to blame but ourselves. God has been incredibly patient and kind to us. With Israel, those days arrived when they rejected the Son.

When the owner of the vineyard sent the son, he said, "They will respect my son" (verse 6). The Son was to be the one who was to be received. The Son was the chief of the prophets ever to be sent. Instead the Son was rejected. Now, this didn't catch Jesus by surprise. He knew that they would reject Him. That's the whole point of the parable that Jesus told! Verse 10, ...

Mark 12:10

Have you not even read this Scripture:

'The stone which the builders rejected,
This became the chief corner stone;
This came about from the Lord,
And it is marvelous in our eyes?'

There are different ideas about what exactly a cornerstone is. Some say that it is the very first stone laid at the foundation of the building to be built, from which all of the walls will be measured. Some say that is the chief stone placed upon an arch which perfectly balances the other stones and keeps them in place. We don't know exactly what a cornerstone is. But, the cornerstone is the most important stone in the whole building.

Here is the ironic thing: if anybody knows stones, it is the builders. Builders are always looking at their materials. A carpenter studies his materials to know which boards can be used here and which sheets of plywood can we put there. A carpenter can spot a good 2x4 and a bad 2x4. A machinist knows a good hunk of metal from a bad hunk of metal. A geologist knows where to dig the well and where not to dig.

For builders of Jesus' day, a perfect stone that can be used as the cornerstone will not be quickly overlooked by the builders. They may not notice a perfect stone in the midst of many stones. But, when they see it and examine it, they certainly won't cast it off.

Likewise, if anybody should know the Messiah, it should be those who are searching for the Messiah. And here, the Messiah was under their nose and the Pharisees totally missed Him. They had witnessed His miracles. They had seen His life and conduct. They had scrutinized His teaching. And they still rejected Him. That's the point of verse 12, ...

Mark 12:12

And they were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And so they left Him and went away.

It was a typical response of these religious leaders, who hated Jesus with a passion. They wanted to seize Him. They were Rejecting the

Stone (12:1-12)

Yet again, we see the fear of man getting in the way of their plans, "they feared the people" (verse 12). And so, Jesus slipped away from their grasp (verse 12). But, soon they would have the opportunity. In fact, this entire section of the gospel of Mark we are in right now has to do with Jesus stirring up the animosity of the religious leaders against Him. He knew that He was come to die (Mark 10:45). He was doing His part to insure that He would die, by bringing truth to the surface.

Lest we think that this was a plan which spun out of control, we see, "This came about from the Lord" (verse 11). God did this whole thing. We read of God's intention in Isaiah 53:10, ...

Isaiah 53:10
But the Lord was pleased
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see His offspring,
He will prolong His days,
And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.

It was no accident that Jesus died upon the cross. You have to remember that when Jesus told this parable, He hadn't yet been crucified. But, He knew that He would be.

On several occasions, Jesus had told His disciples that He was going to Jerusalem to die. [2](#) When Jesus was crucified upon the cross, it was God who put Him there. Don't ever think in your mind that the cross was an unfortunate turn of events. Certainly, the Jews were responsible. They even admitted it, "His blood be upon us and on our children" (Matt. 27:25). But, it was God whose hand was guiding all of history to bring it to pass. "This came about from the Lord." Why did the builders reject the chief corner stone? Because it was "from the Lord."

Turn your attention now upon the last phrase in verse 11, "And it is marvelous in our eyes." It is marvelous in our eyes! The cross is what gives us hope in this life. Were the truth known, we aren't so much different than ancient Israel. We haven't been perfect to merit God's kindness. Yet, God has been kind to us despite us. He has been far beyond kind. The good news of the gospel is that God has extended His saving arm to those who simply believe in the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross.

If the chief cornerstone had never been rejected, we would still be in the state that the Israelites were in. We would be travelling to Jerusalem to offer up bulls and goats in an effort to atone for our sin. But, the book of Hebrews is clear: It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Heb. 10:4). If the chief cornerstone had never been rejected, we would still be dead in our sins, without hope in this present life!

Consider the wonder in the hymnwriter, ...

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong, a perfect plea:
A great High Priest, whose name is Love,
Who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on his hands,
My name is written on his heart;
I know that while in heaven he stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart

When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look, and see him there
Who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God, the Just, is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me

Behold him there, the risen Lamb
My perfect, spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable I am,
The King of glory and of grace!
One with himself, I cannot die
My soul is purchased with his blood
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ, my Savior and my God [3](#)

The cross of Jesus Christ should be marvelous in our eyes!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 7, 2012 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/conference-messages/the-challenge-of-relativism>

[2] Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34

[3] Charitie L. Bancroft, "Before the Throne of God Above", 1863