

# Finishing Well

Lesson #45 Old Gate: Jesus Christ, The Cornerstone Dec. 15

Old Gate - Jeshanah Gate > Stands for Truth

- a. Pivotal 'Corner Gate' located at the northwest corner which is the entry for the old paths.  
[II Kings 14:13; Jeremiah 31:38]

## The Foundation & The Cornerstone

I Cor. 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

- A cornerstone is the first stone placed upon a building's foundation, in a corner of the structure.
- One of the largest, the most solid, and carefully constructed of any in the edifice.
- A cornerstone bears much of the weight of a building's outer structure.
- It connects and unites two of the walls. Once in place, the rest of the building would conform to the angles and size of the cornerstone.

## Prophecies Spoke Of The Messiah As The Cornerstone

Isa. 8:13-15 Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear and let him be your dread. <sup>14</sup> And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

<sup>15</sup> And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

I Pet. 3:14-15a But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror [threats], neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.

Truth: When you fear the LORD, you don't need to fear people or circumstances.

Isa. 28:15 Because you have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

Setting: The nation rejected Isaiah's message because their faith was in their political alliances and not in God. They had made treaties with Assyria and had turned to Egypt for help. These covenants with "death and the grave" were determined to fail because God was not in them. If they had faith in God, they would not be rushing to forge alliances that would only result in shame and failure.

Isa. 28:16-17 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion, a tested stone, A precious cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed.

The one who believes *in it* will not be disturbed. [dismayed; not stricken with panic]

<sup>17</sup> I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the level [plumbline]:

- Since your refuge is made of lies, hail will knock it down.
- Since it is made of deception, a flood will sweep it away.

Context: God, speaking to the people of Judah, was promising them a foundation for their lives if they trusted Him. [repeat Isa. 28:16]

They would never find rest. Their only hope was in the tried and true, "foundation stone."  
This foundation is Jesus, His only begotten Son, who would bring justice to the righteous.

If a cornerstone is not followed, the path of construction will end up in demise.  
Similarly, if we do not follow Christ, our path will end up in destruction and we will definitely go astray. [ByPath Meadow, Giant of Despair & Doubting Castle]

### *The Rejection Of The Cornerstone*

Jer. 6:16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

But they said, We will not walk therein.

Unfortunately, not everyone aligns with the cornerstone. Some accept Christ; some reject Him. When news of the Messiah's arrival came to the magi in the East, they determined to bring Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But when that same news came to King Herod in Jerusalem, his response was to attempt to kill Him.

Prophecy: Simeon prophesied about Jesus    Luke 2:34-35

- Prophecy of a Stone
  - ❖ Jesus: Stumbling Stone to those who reject Him [Rom. 9:32-33; Acts 4:11]
  - ❖ Jesus: Stepping or Cornerstone to those who obey [I Pet. 2:7-8; I Cor. 3:11]
- Prophecy of a Sign
  - ❖ Jesus would be a sign from God, revealing divine truths
- Prophecy of a Sword
  - ❖ Jesus' rejection, persecution and death would pierce through Mary's soul
- In people's reaction to Jesus, they would reveal their true heart.

From the very beginning, Jesus was "a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall" [I Peter 2:8].

Ps. 118:22-24 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.

The LORD has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record Jesus referring to this passage as finding its fulfillment in Him. [Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17].

- Each Gospel indicates this teaching of Jesus occurred during the week of the Passover, while Jesus was in Jerusalem during the time between His triumphal entry [Nisan 10] and His crucifixion [Nisan 14]. [4 days of inspection]

Matt. 21:23 The chief priests and the elders of the people came unto Him [...] and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"

- Jesus had just cleansed the temple.

The parable of The Tenants, based on Isaiah 5:1-7, contains several metaphors to portray:

- The nature of God's undying love for His people
- His goodness to them as a nation
- His persistent efforts to cultivate a people for His name.

God chose this nation, made a covenant with them, gave them the commandments, brought them to the Promised Land, & arranged everything necessary for their religious, social & cultural life. He entrusted His people to leaders who, if they had been faithful, would have harvested a bumper crop. Israel should have been a light to the nations, pointing them to God, who so richly supplied their needs.

Question: What did God ask of them? Bear fruit for His glory

He sent prophets to the people to receive the fruit, but they mistreated the prophets and even killed some.

The metaphoric details of this parable are specifically chosen as representative of the major elements of God's plan of redemption for Israel.

- Owner of the vineyard                      God
- The vineyard                                Israel
- The tenant farmers                        Religious leaders of Israel
- Servants of the owner                    The prophets
- Son/Heir of the owner                    Jesus Christ

Matt. 21:33-44 There was a certain householder [Master of the House, God], which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

1. The Master planted a vineyard.

- Quote from Isaiah 5:1-7 which clarifies the vineyard is the nation of Israel.

Isa. 5:7a For the vineyard of the Lord of armies is the house of Israel,  
And the people of Judah are His delightful plant.

Christ is actually appropriating the song of Isaiah to see if His audience will make the link to this OT prophecy and connect it to the context of their day.

2. He hedged it about.      Fence about or Create a Barrier Around

- God's divine protection: cloud by day, pillar of fire by night
- The Law of Moses protected Israel from the diseases, both physical and spiritual, that infected Gentile nations

3. He fenced it and gathered out the stones.    Isa. 5:2

Seems to refer to the land being purified and prepared for farming, symbolizing the initial purging of the Canaanite nations.

Ps. 44:1-3 We have heard it with our ears, O God; our ancestors have told us what you did in their days, in days long ago. With your hand you drove out the nations and planted our ancestors; you crushed the peoples and made our ancestors flourish.

It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them. You are my King and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob.

#### 4. God, the owner, "dugged a winepress."

The Vulgate [Greek & Hebrew translated into Latin] says the winepress is symbolic of the altar. The Targum, an ancient translation/paraphrase completed around AD 70 when the Hebrew language was dying out, also translates this as "Altar."

Question: Could the winepress be representative of the Altar of Burnt Offerings?

- The altar was God's provision for atonement.
- People brought their offering to the priest who burned the entire animal on the altar.
- The altar was designed to channel the blood of the animal so it ran out beneath the altar.
- The blood signified the life of the beast and was representative of the greater sacrifice of Christ who was to come and whose life-blood would atone for sin.

How is the winepress analogous to the altar of burnt offerings in Scripture?

An ancient winepress in Israel was typically a rock-hewn open-air system. Grapes were pressed by being trodden underfoot in a treading floor where the workers hung onto ropes attached to an overhead structure to avoid slipping.

"The juice would then flow down a gully or channel from the main pressing area into a deeper hole, known as the 'yekev.' Twigs or thorns would be placed strategically to act as a rudimentary filter." [Jerusalem Post, A. Montefiore, 2015]

The metaphor of the winepress, like the altar, represents the atoning work of Christ.

But the work was not complete without Him first putting to death the flesh.

- Symbolized here in the thorny filter placed before the channel to remove the flesh of the grape.
- Like refined wine, His blood was poured out as a pure offering to provide redemption for all.

Is there a metaphor of the winepress linked to the atonement and the work of Christ?

Isaiah 63:1-6: The prophet, in vision, beholds the Messiah returning in triumph from the conquest of His enemies, of whom Edom is a type. He is travelling, not as one wearied by combat, but in the greatness of His strength, prepared to overcome every opposing power.

In verse 3, The Messiah declares: *I have trodden the winepress of the wrath of God alone* [past tense], and that "*I will tread down the people in His anger.*" [future tense]

The winepress is a metaphor of Christ's work, both in the past and in the future.

Isaiah is speaking of Christ's accomplished sacrifice and His future judgment of the nations, where He will tread down His oppressors in the great winepress of the wrath of God.

[Rev. 14:19; 19:11-15]

## 5. He Built A Tower

Barnes Bible Commentary states that vineyard towers can be found in Bethlehem and Hebron and range from 15 to 50 feet high. These are for keeping watch over the vineyard from thieves and vermin, and to provide sanctuary for the keepers of the vineyard.

Isa. 1:8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard

- Strong's: booth, cottage, covert, pavilion, tabernacle

The tower may represent the Tabernacle which is full of many symbols, all of which illustrate that in God's sanctuary there is respite and freedom from sin.

The tower seems to fit quite well with the concept of the Tabernacle.

- The Vulgate, Targum and Clarke's Bible Commentary all concur on this idea.

God gave Israel a perfect environment.

- choice vineyard dug over/rich land free from enemies

He hedged them about and gave them His Law

- They received His divine protection and were instructed by His principles

God digged a winepress, altar & Jesus Christ

- The Law pointed them to His redemptive work

God built a tower [Tabernacle]

- Which offered them respite from sin, and sanctuary with God Himself

Remember: This parable is primarily about the privileges and blessings God had bestowed upon His people. They were the means of God demonstrating His love and His plan of redemption and salvation to His people.

What could be more important than the land, the law, the Altar and the Temple in Christ's mind?

Matt. 21:34 When the time of the fruit drew near, He sent His servants [prophets] to the husbandmen [religious leaders] that they might receive the fruits of it. [Purpose]

God's purpose with Israel: They might use the national and spiritual blessings He'd poured on them to produce fruit to His name; that the surrounding nations might see also and believe.

They were to be a fruitful vineyard, blossoming under the care of the husbandmen, showing show forth as a witness to the world God's abundant goodness and desire to redeem all mankind!

- They were a witness to God's existence as the only true & living God. [Isa. 43:10-11]
- Be a witness to God's existence and to His plan
- His desire is to bless all families of the earth. [Gen. 12:1-3]

Consider: The fruit He was seeking when he sent His servants was simply that he wanted to see a people growing under His care and glowing in His love, like new grapes on the vine!

Jeremiah gives us insight into God's purpose with His prophets.

Jer. 7:25-26 Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them:

Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.

The picture of God is of a passionate, hard-working, conscientious worker, who has His team on the job at the crack of dawn, not willing to lose a minute of time to fulfill His duty.

But Israel's answer was always the same - they turned their back on God's goodness and despised His blessings. It was the same for many of the prophets.

This picture of God faithfully rising early to work on the nation's behalf is echoed by other prophets and a contrast is drawn between God's enthusiasm and Israel's despondence.

Zeph. 3:2-7 "Israel obeyed not the voice, she listens to no voice, she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the LORD; she does not draw near to her God. The Lord within her is righteous; He does no injustice; every morning he shows forth His justice: each dawn He does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame...I have cut off nations: their battlements are in ruins; have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them; their cities have been made desolate, without a man, without an inhabitant. I said, 'Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction. Then your dwelling would not be cut off according to all I have appointed against you. But you rose early and corrupted all your doings.'"

Hosea 6:4 "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

- So despite the immense work God was putting into the nation to make them fruitful, despite all His goodness; their goodness, in contrast, was like a morning cloud that looks promising but like dew, it never hangs around. It evaporated in the air.
- Result: there was no growth.

Each morning God rose early to bless the nation, while they rose early to corrupt His ways. From the moment Israel left Egypt, they completely misunderstood God's intention.

Isaiah: Time and time again instead of receiving fruit - there were only "wild grapes,"

- stinking poisonous berries [Strong's]

Not only did Israel ignore God's love, but they abused and killed His servants, the prophets: "Some they beat, some they stoned and some they killed," [all 3 Gospel records agree]

Matt. 21:35-36 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.<sup>36</sup> Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

Matthew 23:37 comments on this fact where it says, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

The Scriptures are riddled with the torture, mockery, abuse and slaughter of hundreds of God's faithful prophets who shared the same passion and love for His/their people, and who rose with God early to reap the harvest.

This parable is a snapshot of the intense satisfaction God finds in producing a people that will exhibit His saving grace; it's a snapshot of the intense labor of love that He has immersed and pledged His entire existence too. God will never stop loving His people Israel, though from the beginning until now they have rejected Him, time and again!

You can hear the utter exasperation in the voice of God in Isaiah, where the prophet cries, Isa. 5:4 What more could I do for my vineyard that I have not done already?

Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

➤ And yet the parable is not over...God did do more!

Long after the point where you or I would have torn into that vineyard, ripped into those husbandmen and disgraced them for their shameful behavior, God's response

#### 6. What Shall I Do? Matt. 21:37

I will send My beloved Son. "It may be they will reverence Him when they see Him!"

➤ The owner anticipates that his son's visit will be fruitful.

We cannot fathom the depth of God's love. God knew they would despise Him more than the rest and plot His death. Against all odds, He gave them everything, until there was nothing left.

This last servant was the express image of the Owner himself! [Heb. 1:3]

➤ *"Surely, if they can see me - see what I'm truly like in nature, and witness 'in person' my intense love for them - they will understand My intentions to save!"*

Matt. 21:38-41 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

<sup>39</sup> And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

➤ An allusion to Jesus' death outside Jerusalem.

<sup>40</sup> When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

<sup>41</sup> They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

➤ The vineyard goes to those outside the leadership, even the nation, as the promise will encompass many people of the nations.

Note: Acts fills in this part of the story. It is clear: Israel still has a place in God's plan.

➤ Acts 1:6-11; 3:18-22; Rom 11:1-32

Luke 20:16b And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.

Luke 20:17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written,

Matt. 21: 42 The *STONE* which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? [He quotes from Ps. 118]

Ps. 118:22-24 The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

<sup>23</sup> This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

<sup>24</sup> This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

## Peter's Interpretation Acts 4:8-12

Verse 10: The STONE is Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Verse 8: The builders are the rulers of the people and elders.

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.

### *Four Marvelous Facts About Jesus' Word in Matt. 21:42*

1. Jesus predicts His own resurrection before it happens.

Mark 14:28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

John 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

Matt. 16:4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.

Consider: Jesus knew He was No ordinary man. Marvel that part of His self-understanding was the assurance that He would rise from the dead.

2. Builders' Blindness: The very stone they rejected has become the head of the corner.

➤ The people who should know stones best did not recognize the best stone.

Mark 6:6 Jesus marveled because of their unbelief.

John 3:10 Jesus answered and said unto him [Nicodemus], Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

The religious leaders should have been the first to recognize Him.

Truth: Academic stature has never been a guarantee of religious insight.

3. The Rejected Stone Now the Head Stone: A Fully Human Man Reigning at God's Right Hand  
God the son came into the world & clothed Himself with flesh in order to die for sinners like you & me. A divine nature & a human nature came together in one person.

Jesus Christ rose from the dead & ascended into heaven at the right hand of God.

The One reigning in heaven today ate, drank, taught, healed & suffered on earth.

He is a rejected stone with pierced hands & feet. Flesh & bone!

Rom. 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.

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

Eph. 1:20-22 Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places,

<sup>21</sup> Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

<sup>22</sup> And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church.



Paul could preach in Athens with unwavering authority:

Acts 17:31 God has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed, and of this He has given assurance to all men by raising Him from the dead.

Matt. 21:43-44-Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

The point of God's judgment on the nation is clear as the crowd responds,

"May this never be!" The point is clear and shocking to all—this should never happen, they respond. Yet this very act of murder is days away from taking place! Crucify Him!

- The leadership and the people reject The Cornerstone
- Jesus is the foundation stone of God's plan. Though some may reject him, God will make Him the centerpiece of His plan. Rejection by the Jewish nation is not the end of the plan. There is no replacing this precious and chosen stone.
- Rejecting the "beloved Son" has grave consequences—not for the Son, since He will be raised up by God, but for those who reject Him.
- Judgment resides with "the rock." To fall on that stone is to be broken to pieces.
- The parable is Jesus' statement regarding the source of His authority. He is the beloved Son. God will vindicate Him and exalt Him. His death will be followed by resurrection and exaltation into a place of authority [Acts 2:22-39].

### *New Testament: Jesus Is Called The Chief Cornerstone*

God has declared Christ the chief, living cornerstone of a spiritual house made up of those redeemed by Him, built upon the truth of the Gospel and sustained by the power of His Holy Spirit.

I Pet. 2:4-5 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by people but is choice and precious in the sight of God, <sup>5</sup> you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

- Jesus is a living stone because He was raised from the dead in victory.
- Jesus alone joins the entire building of the Church to become a Holy temple.
- As a living stone, I am being chipped away at, reshaped, and polished in some way each day through the Holy Spirit in me.
- He is reproducing Himself in us to make us what He is, living stones in God's building.
- Christ is the cornerstone, the One who joins the Gentile and Jewish members of Christ's Body together, the One who blends us and builds us up into the one new man where Christ is all and in all [Eph. 2:20; I Pet. 2:6].

I Pet. 2:6 For *this* is contained in Scripture:

"BEHOLD, I AM LAYING IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE, AND THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME."

- Peter quotes Isa. 28:16; Ps. 118:22; Romans 9:33 - He refers to Isa. 8:14

I Pet. 2:7-8 Therefore, to you who believe, *He is precious*; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense."

- They stumble because they are disobedient to the Word and to this they were also appointed.

Note: Christ though chosen by God, was rejected by men.

He was not the kind of Messiah they were expecting, so they stumbled over Him.

### *Smiting, Sovereign Stone*

In Daniel 2:31-45, we read of a great "STONE cut out, but not by human hands [supernatural origin]" which struck the statute representing the Gentile kingdoms, crushing them into oblivion. It describes a rock hurtling through space, impacting the image with great force and utterly obliterating it. This is a catastrophic cataclysmic crushing, a complete demolition; there is nothing at all left of all the kingdoms of the world.

They are blown away like chaff; not a trace of them could be found.

The STONE = Jesus Christ will return as the victorious King of kings and Lord of lords [Rev 19:16]

"The STONE that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

Mountain = Establish His everlasting kingdom which will fill the whole earth [Dan. 2:44]

Time is moving toward this climactic event, when the Son of God shall return in power and glory to bring in the kingdom of everlasting righteousness.

The Smiting Stone of Daniel	Daniel 2:34	The Stone that will fill the whole earth	Daniel 2:35
The Head Stone of the Corner	Psalms 118:22	The Higher Rock	Psalms 61:2
The Grinding/Crushing Stone	Matthew 21:44	A Precious Stone	I Pet. 2:6-7
A Rock that is like no other	I Samuel 2:2	A Rock of delivery	II Sam. 22:2
The Rock of refuge	Psalms 94:22	Rock of my salvation	Ps. 95:1
Our Only Rock	Ps. 62:6	My Rock in whom I trust	Ps. 18:2
The Rock from which water poured forth in the wilderness			I Cor. 10:4
The Rock in whose cleft we are sheltered and protected			Exodus 33:22
The Rock upon whom the church is built			Matt. 16:18
The Solid Rock upon whom we are to build our lives			Matthew 7:24
The Chief Cornerstone		Isaiah 28:16, Acts 4:11, Ephesian 2:20, I Peter 2:6	
The Stone that the Builders Rejected		Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17, I Peter 2:7	
A Stumbling Stone, a rock [large stone] of offense		Isaiah 8:14; I Peter 2:8	