

2026-08-09: 1st Sunday of Mesore - The Stone Which the Builders Rejected

Visual Aid

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/jvgr52xhaijwwl4lt72wq/The-Stone-Which-the-Builders-Rejected.pptx?rlkey=4pzujsajpir0vsthfnobjv5jr&dl=0>

Background

Today is the 1st Sunday of the Coptic Month of Mesore and the Church arranges the readings of the first three Sundays of this month to speak about how the Lord cares for His Church.

Introduction

Today the Gospel Reading according to St Luke showed us one of the very important parables that the Lord preached: The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers. The Lord said this parable near the end of His ministry in Jerusalem and its meaning was very clear to the Pharisees and Chief Priests and Scribes - so much so that they sought to lay hands on Him after hearing it.

A vinedresser planted a vineyard. Then he leased it to some vinedressers, and went away for a long time.

When it was vintage-time, when it was time for the vineyard to produce fruits, the man sent his servant to go and get some of that fruit. The vinedressers beat the servant and sent him away. So he sent another servant... again, they beat him and sent him away empty. Then he sent a third... again, they wounded him and cast him out.

So the man sends his son, and the gospel says specifically: "his beloved son" - but when the vinedressers saw him, they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. And the Lord tells them "Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others."

And the chief priests and scribes UNDERSTOOD the Parable, so they said "Certainly not!"

They understood that:

- The man refers to God
- The vineyard refers to Israel

- The vinedressers refer to them, the keepers of Israel in that day
- The servants refer to the prophets
- The son refers to the Lord Jesus Christ

The message of the parable was that God had entrusted them with a vineyard, a promised land, a nation, a people. And when God sent His servants, the prophets, they persecuted them and cast them out and rejected them. And they understood that now God sends His Son - His beloved Son - and He is rejected, and He will be killed. And God will destroy them and give the vineyard to someone else. The Gentiles... the Christians.

And the Lord drives home the idea by referring to the prophecy of Psalm 118 - "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone."

This is the prophetic meaning of this parable. The Lord prophesies His death at the hands of the Jewish people, and the giving of the Heavenly Kingdom to others; to Gentiles. We, the Christian people. The New Israel.

There is also a spiritual meaning. These wicked vinedressers were evil stewards. The owner of the vineyard leased it to them - he made them stewards. He entrusted them the care of his vineyard, the responsibility of it, and they were evil in their stewardship. They rejected the chief cornerstone... they rejected Christ.

Let me examine myself, as a steward of God's vineyard, do I reject Him? What does rejection of Christ look like? We will talk about three types of rejection.

1 - Reject Christ in Doctrine

It is like saying: *"I will not believe what You teach"*

- "He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 1:9)
- This was the first way that the Pharisees rejected Christ. They did not believe what He taught. They did not believe that He is God, the Son of God. They did not believe that He came to save them and the rest of the world. They did not believe that He would rise on the third day.
- Someone might ask - does it really matter if I don't have the right belief or the right theology, or if I get something wrong... Of course it does!
- The Doctrine given to us by Christ is so clear because He usually gives it in the positive AND the negative.
 - "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." (John 6:53-55)
 - "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16)
 - "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

- Just as the Jews rejected the Doctrine of Christ in His day, and the Lord quoted for them this verse, so also those in our day who reject the Doctrine of Christ - His Salvation, His Grace, His Church, His Sacraments - reject Him.

2 - Reject Christ in Morality

It is like saying: *"I will not obey what You command"*

- Another form of rejecting Christ is rejecting Him in morality. Being lukewarm in my moral behavior.
- The Pharisees did this too. Although they knew God's command very well, they were more interested in the outward appearance of God's command. And the Lord rebuked them for it - "You also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Matthew 23:28)
- I may think of myself as someone who understands the doctrine of the Church and even the commandment of God... but if I don't do it, then I understand nothing! Then I reject Him!
- "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15)
- Moral behavior could be something I am doing - I am acting immorally. Read the end of Romans 1: "Unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful." (Romans 1:29-31)
- Moral behavior could be something I am supporting or approving: "who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." (Romans 1:32)
- Moral behavior could be that I cause someone else to stumble - my brother is standing next to me, trying to hold himself from sin. And I sin in front of him. And God forbid I even tell him "just because you're weak that's not my problem." You reject Christ. You reject the Chief Cornerstone.
 - We heard from Fr Reweis last night about St Paesa and the impact that friends can have when causing each other to stumble. In the beginning of her story, she was amazing - giving alms, opening a house for the poor, spiritual canon. But when, because of evil friends causing her to stumble, she started to do evil, St John the Short said to her "Why do you belittle the Lord Christ and do this evil deed?" Why do you reject the chief cornerstone?
- Moral behavior could be something I am lukewarm - I am not approving or disapproving, I am just letting it go and going with the flow. "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth." (Revelation 3:16-17)

3 - Reject Christ in Priority

It is like saying: *"I will not give my life to You"*

- This is the most difficult form of rejecting Christ, because we all do it every day. Even if we believe in the teaching of Christ and the Church. Even if we understand the

commandment of God and strive to do it regularly. But still sometimes, the hardest thing is to prioritize the Lord in my daily life.

- It is hard to keep my spiritual canon consistent.
- It is hard to use PTO to attend a feast or a convention or a service day
- It is hard to reject friends who are not edifying me, in favor of Christ
- It is hard to put spiritual growth in the forefront when I'm concerned about academic growth, physical growth, relationships, etc.
- It is hard to put aside my own will and what I want for my life, and check first what God wants in my life.
- But the Lord tells us...
 - "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:33)
 - Seek Me first, and all those other things you're worried about, all those things that you WANT to prioritize, I will give those to you as well.

Conclusion

The Scribes and Pharisees heard these words today, and heard the Lord quoting Psalm 118: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone." But when they heard this, and understood the parable was about Him, they sought to lay hands on him. They did not turn in repentance. They did not examine themselves.

How about me?

Today I hear the same verse - "the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone." Will I go and examine myself? Will I turn in repentance?

Let me examine myself to see if I reject the Lord in His Doctrine, or in His Commandments or in Prioritizing Him in my life. The Lord is always ready and waiting for our repentance.

Glory be to God, forever. Amen.

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