



Almont Vineyard Church

Week 4 Summer Series: The Sandals of Jesus/ The Cornerstone

June 27, 2026

Opening Monologue

Welcome to the AVC App! Whether you're a longtime part of our family or joining us for the very first time, we're truly glad you're here.

You've landed in the Sermon Section of the App — your go-to place for commentary, spiritual reflections, discussion questions, and more. All of it is designed to help you dive deeper into Sunday's message and apply it to your everyday walk with Christ. As you read and reflect, I pray the Holy Spirit gives you new insight and fresh strength for the journey ahead.

We're heading into Week 4 of our series this week. If you missed the past sermon. Here's the link <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

This week we are following "The Sandals of Jesus – The Cornerstone," where we hear Jesus repeat a quote from an ancient Psalm: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." (Psalm 118:22-23) We will hear Jesus give us a deeper meaning to His quote to the religious leaders in Mark 12:1-12.

The Cornerstone, in Jesus' day, wasn't a decorative plaque — it was the single most critical stone in the entire building. Masons would examine many stones and choose only the one that was true, strong, and perfectly suited — often rejecting the rest. That chosen master stone became the reference point for everything else. It set the standard of alignment for the whole structure and bore the heavy load where the walls met. If it was even slightly off, the entire building would be crooked and unstable. Check out the slides in sermon that shows Cornerstones still standing from Jesus' Day.

In Sunday's sermon we are going to break down what Jesus taught about the Cornerstone and how we need the Cornerstone to be our foundation. In case you are unaware, Jesus is the Cornerstone. And in the Old Testament, God would send His prophets to deliver the oracles of the Lord... but the people rejected them over and over again. All of this culminates in the New Testament with the arrival of God's Son, Jesus — who the religious leaders also rejected and had put to death. (Mark 12:1-12)

As Christians we like to think that we don't ever reject Christ... maybe not the same way they did... but what about turning our backs on Him and doing what we feel is best in our own eyes — sin and selfish desires, etc.

Join us this Sunday as we listen to Jesus' words, so we become better equipped to live our lives in this depraved world.

Jesus said: "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise builder who dug deep and laid the foundation of his house on solid rock. When the rain poured down, the floods rose, and the winds beat against that house, it stood firm because it was built on rock." (Paraphrased Version of Matthew 7:24-27)

Friends, Jesus is the Rock... our firm foundation. May we never build our lives on sinking sand.

In Christ,

Rev. Pastor Brad

To Listen to this week's Sermon: "Week 4 Summer Series: The Sandals of Jesus/ The Cornerstone" Go to the Sermon tab here in our APP or use the links to our website or YouTube Channel where you can also listen to our Sermons:

Web: <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

Key Sermon Text

Psalm 118:22-23 <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20118%3A22-23&version=NIV>

Matthew 7:24- 27

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%207%3A24-%2027&version=NIV>

Matthew 21:42

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2021%3A42%20&version=NIV>

Mark 12: 1-12

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2012%3A%201-12&version=NIV>

What is a Cornerstone & Why Was It Rejected

The cornerstone held extraordinary structural and symbolic importance in ancient construction, which is precisely why its rejection and elevation became such a powerful metaphor for Jesus.

Why the Cornerstone Mattered

The cornerstone served as the principal stone at a building's corner, guiding workers in their layout, and was typically the largest, most solid, and most carefully constructed stone in the entire structure. Once positioned, it became the basis for determining every measurement in the remaining construction—everything was aligned to it. In biblical architectural imagery, the cornerstone represents the focal point of a building and what it most depends on for structural integrity. A flawed cornerstone would compromise the entire edifice, so builders examined stones meticulously before selection.

The Original Old Testament Setting

In the Old Testament context, the "builders" were kingdoms and empires—the superpowers of the ancient Near East—who dismissed Israel (and its king) as insignificant or worthless. The stone in Psalm 118 represents the nation (most naturally the king of Israel). The psalmist was assailed by the nations but delivered by the Lord, and the nations failed to perceive the psalmist's potential and significance. God's program focused on the nation of Israel and the Davidic dynasty, even though this king (and the nation he represents) was considered worthless by the "super powers."

Why the Builders Rejected It

The rejection wasn't about the stone's physical quality—it was about the builders' vision and priorities. Those who reject Christ want to build something different from what God is building. In the New Testament, the "builders" shift to the Jewish religious leadership. Jesus, the rejected one, challenged the plausibility structures of His religion and society, siding with those who suffered under them, and was violently rejected for it.

The Jewish religious leaders rejected Jesus because His message of compassion, justice, and inclusion threatened their power structures and interpretations of God's law. The wicked vineyard tenants (representing the ruling priests) rejected the vineyard owner's (God's) son (Jesus), yet the "stone" rejected by the "builders" would become the cornerstone—foundation of God's restored people.

The Paradox

What makes the cornerstone metaphor so striking is the inversion: To those with faith, Jesus Christ is the chosen, precious foundation stone; but to those without faith, He is a stone of stumbling. The very stone deemed worthless became irreplaceable. There is a divinely ordained pattern and identifiable link between the Old Testament type and its New Testament fulfillment in the Messiah, with an escalation in meaning. God's pattern of working in the life of the Davidic king is seen again in His working in and through the Messiah.

[Sources: 1-6]

What are Cornerstones and Why are They Important- a Physical and Biblical glance:

The Hebrew word for "cornerstone" in Psalm 118:22 is pinnah (פִּנָּה). Literally meaning "corner" or "angle," pinnah in architectural contexts refers to the critical stone at the corner of a building's foundation where two walls met. In Psalm 118:22 it carries the powerful image of a foundational, guiding stone that everything else is aligned to — the principal stone that gives strength and direction to the whole structure.

The word pinnah appears elsewhere for literal building corners (such as in descriptions of the temple or city walls) and is also used metaphorically for leaders or key figures who provide stability and alignment for God's people (see Isaiah 28:16, Jeremiah 51:26, Zechariah 10:4). In the Old Testament worldview, rejecting the pinnah was extremely serious because it threatened the integrity of the entire building or nation.

In Jesus' day, the cornerstone (often referred to in Greek as akrogōniaios) was the single most critical stone used in large-scale architecture in the Middle East. Rather than a symbolic decorative plaque like modern cornerstones, an ancient cornerstone was a massive, meticulously carved block placed at the foundation's base where two primary walls met.

Ancient Masonry Techniques

Ancient masons in the Middle East and Mediterranean used sophisticated techniques to prepare and place cornerstones. They quarried large limestone or sandstone blocks, then shaped them with chisels, hammers, and measuring tools to achieve precise angles and flat surfaces. Cornerstones were often the largest and most carefully dressed stones in the foundation — sometimes weighing several tons — and were set using levers, ramps, and ropes. Builders employed plumb lines, levels, and sighting rods to ensure perfect vertical and horizontal alignment. The cornerstone was typically laid first (or among the first stones), serving as the anchor point for the rest of the foundation. Mortar (often lime-based) and dry-stone fitting techniques helped lock everything together for maximum stability.

Why the Cornerstone Mattered

Builders would examine many stones and choose only the one that was true, strong, and perfectly suited — often rejecting others that didn't measure up. This master stone served as the literal standard of alignment: every other stone in the foundation and walls had to line up perfectly with its angle, level, and straightness. It also bore the heavy load where the walls intersected, anchoring the whole structure so it wouldn't shift or collapse. If the cornerstone was even slightly off, the entire building would be crooked and unstable.

Masons carefully selected these critical pieces, as they determined the structural integrity and alignment of the entire edifice. In some biblical contexts, the term also referred to the "chief cornerstone" or capstone, the final crowning stone at the top of an arch or wall that locked the entire structure together.

This practice was common across the ancient Middle East and Mediterranean world. Notable examples include the Second Temple in Jerusalem (greatly expanded by King Herod), which used massive cornerstones (some weighing multiple tons) to ensure stability, along with other monumental temples, palaces, and city gates throughout the region.

***See Sermon PowerPoints for Pictures**

The Deeper Meaning

Calling Jesus the cornerstone meant that all faith, practice, and salvation must align with Him. Just as builders checked their work against the foundation stone, the lives of believers were meant to be measured and squared by Jesus' teachings. To those who refused to build their lives on Him, the cornerstone became a "stone of stumbling." Yet Paul later used this imagery in Ephesians 2:20 to explain how Jesus unites different groups of people — Jew and Gentile — into one cohesive structure, with Jesus Christ Himself as the chief cornerstone.

The cornerstone was essential because it was the chosen, irreplaceable foundation upon which everything else depended. Jesus is that ultimate Cornerstone — rejected by many, yet chosen by God as the firm foundation for His people.

The Cornerstone Metaphor in the New Testament outside the Gospels

New Testament authors employ the cornerstone metaphor in remarkably consistent yet nuanced ways, all drawing from Psalm 118:22 while adapting it to different theological contexts and audiences.

Key New Testament Passages (Outside the Gospels)

1. Acts 4:11 (Peter speaking to the Sanhedrin)

"Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.'"

Summary: Peter directly applies Psalm 118 to Jesus, telling the religious leaders that they rejected the Messiah, but God made Him the essential foundation of the new people of God.

2. Ephesians 2:20

"...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."

Summary: Jesus is the primary, unifying stone that holds the entire church (made up of Jews and Gentiles) together as one holy temple. He provides the alignment and strength for God's new community.

3. 1 Peter 2:4-8

“As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him... ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’... ‘A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.’”

Summary: Jesus is the living, precious cornerstone for believers who trust in Him (they become a spiritual house). For those who reject Him, He becomes a stone of stumbling and judgment.

The Gospels and Acts: Rejection and Vindication

In the Gospels, the stone saying forms the conclusion to the parable of the wicked husbandmen, where the stone clearly refers to the king’s son as a reference to Jesus. Luke adds a message of judgment, and Matthew adds a word about the loss of the kingdom. In Acts 4:11, Peter confirms the events as being according to Scripture, with the rejection of the stone referring to Jesus’ death and the placing of the stone as the cornerstone referring to His resurrection and exaltation.

Peter’s Expanded Theology

In 1 Peter 2:4-8, Peter combines the rejection of the stone in Psalm 118:22 with the chosen and precious stone in Isaiah 28:16, adding the idea of the living Stone from his own experience of Jesus’ resurrection. He encourages his readers to come to Jesus so they may be built up as a spiritual house to God. The metaphor is clear: the cornerstone is either a source of blessing or judgment, depending on a person’s attitude toward it.

Paul’s Ecclesiological Vision

Paul builds on this concept in Ephesians 2:20 by saying that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. The Old Testament concept of cornerstone is applied to Jesus to emphasize His exalted position with the Father and to encourage the believer.

The New Testament consistently presents Jesus as the rejected-yet-chosen cornerstone: the irreplaceable foundation of God’s people, the source of unity, and the one by whom all are measured — either for blessing or for judgment.

Sources: 7-9

Other “Rejected Stone” Metaphors in Scripture

The “rejected stone” image in Psalm 118:22 (the stone the builders rejected becoming the cornerstone) is powerful, and Scripture uses similar stone imagery elsewhere to emphasize themes of rejection, God’s sovereign choice, judgment, and ultimate vindication. Here are the main examples:

1. Isaiah 28:16 (The Chosen, Precious Stone)

“So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic.’”

- Context: God promises a secure foundation for His people amid judgment on corrupt leaders.

- Meaning: This is the positive counterpart to Psalm 118. The stone is chosen and reliable. New Testament writers combine it with Psalm 118 to describe Jesus as the precious, trustworthy cornerstone for believers (see 1 Peter 2:6).

2. Isaiah 8:14 (Stone of Stumbling)

“...he will be a holy place; for both Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.”

- Context: A warning about God’s judgment on those who reject His ways.
- Meaning: The same stone that is a secure foundation for the faithful becomes a stumbling block for those who oppose God. Peter and Paul apply this to Jesus (1 Peter 2:8; Romans 9:33) — rejection of Him leads to judgment.

3. Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45 (The Stone Cut Without Hands)

A stone “not cut by human hands” strikes the statue representing human kingdoms, shatters them, and grows into a mountain that fills the whole earth.

- Context: Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about successive empires.
- Meaning: The stone represents God’s eternal kingdom that destroys human pride and replaces it. Many see this as pointing to the coming of Christ and His kingdom.

4. Zechariah 4:7 (The Capstone)

“What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of ‘God bless it! God bless it!’”

- Context: Encouragement during the rebuilding of the temple after the exile.
- Meaning: The capstone (top/finishing stone) represents completion and success through God’s Spirit, not human might. It echoes the idea that God finishes what He starts, even when it looks impossible.

How These Connect to the Cornerstone Theme

- The rejected stone (Psalm 118) becomes the chosen, precious cornerstone (Isaiah 28).
- It can be a stone of stumbling for those who reject it (Isaiah 8).
- God’s kingdom is an unstoppable stone that crushes opposition (Daniel 2).
- The work of God is completed with a triumphant capstone (Zechariah 4).

New Testament Fulfillment

The apostles saw all of this converging in Jesus: the rejected stone God made the cornerstone (Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:4-8), the stone of stumbling for unbelievers, and the foundation of the new temple (the church) in Ephesians 2:20.

Commentary, Spiritual Applications, and Theological Reflections

Psalm 118 Summary

A Song of Thanksgiving and the Rejected Stone Made Cornerstone

Psalm 118 is a beautiful and powerful psalm of thanksgiving. It opens and closes with the same joyful call: “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.” This refrain frames the entire song and reminds us that no matter what we face, God’s steadfast love (his hesed — faithful, covenant love) never fails.

The psalm is not just a private prayer. It was likely used in a public worship setting, possibly as part of a liturgical procession. The first half (verses 1–18) seems to take place outside the temple, where the psalmist and the people celebrate God’s past deliverance. The second half (verses 19–29) shifts inside the temple courts, with references to gates, priests, and worship. The psalm moves from personal testimony to communal praise and hope for the future.

The Psalmist’s Story of Deliverance (verses 5–18)

The heart of the psalm is the psalmist’s story of distress and rescue. He describes feeling “hard pressed” — hemmed in, trapped, and surrounded on every side by enemies (“all the nations”). The imagery is vivid: he was like someone caught in a narrow, constricting place with no escape.

But God stepped in. The Lord brought him out into a “spacious place” — a wide-open area of freedom and safety. This contrast between “narrowness” and “wideness” is a major theme. Salvation is pictured as God moving His people from a cramped, threatening situation into open, abundant life.

The psalmist gives God all the credit. He declares that it is “better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in humans” or even in “princes.” Two important interludes reinforce this truth. One is a wisdom saying: don’t put your ultimate trust in people. The other is a victory song that echoes the exodus — specifically the Song of Moses in Exodus 15. The psalmist quotes directly from it: “The Lord is my strength and my defense.” God’s powerful right hand, which delivered Israel from Egypt, has once again acted to save.

Even in his suffering, the psalmist sees God’s hand. He understands that the Lord “chastened” him (disciplined or taught him through the hardship), but God did not let him die. The distress was real, but it was not the final word. God’s deliverance was greater.

The Cornerstone Passage (verses 22–23)

This is one of the most famous and important parts of the psalm — and a key focus for the sermon.

“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”

In ancient building practices (especially in the Middle East during biblical times), the cornerstone (ro’sh pinnah in Hebrew, literally “head of the corner”) was not a decorative plaque like we often see today. It was the single most important stone in the entire structure.

Builders would carefully examine many stones and select only the best one — strong, perfectly shaped, and true. This master stone was placed at the corner where two walls met. It served as the literal reference point for the whole building:

- Every other stone had to be aligned with its angle, level, and straightness.
- It bore the heavy structural load where the walls intersected.
- If the cornerstone was even slightly off, the entire building would end up crooked, weak, and unstable.

The proverb in verse 22 describes a surprising reversal: the very stone the builders examined and threw aside as worthless or unsuitable has now been chosen by God and made the cornerstone. What looked like rejection and failure has become the foundation of something new and strong.

In the context of the psalm, this image applies to the psalmist himself (and by extension to God's people). He had been surrounded, rejected, and pushed down — treated like a stone that didn't belong. But God lifted him up, restored him, and placed him back in the "structure" of the community as someone valuable and essential. The worshiping community celebrates this: the Lord has done it, and it is marvelous in our eyes!

This is not just about one man's story. It points to a bigger pattern in God's dealings with His people — the rejected one becomes the foundation. The New Testament writers saw this fulfilled perfectly in Jesus Christ.

From Personal Deliverance to Communal Hope (verses 19–29)

After his rescue, the psalmist comes to the temple to offer thanksgiving and sacrifice. There is a beautiful entrance liturgy where he asks to enter the "gates of the righteous." The priests respond that only those made right with God may enter. The psalmist's deliverance has restored his relationship with God.

The community then joins in praise. They celebrate what God has done and cry out together: "Lord, save us!" (This is where we get the word "Hosanna.") Even while giving thanks for past deliverance, they pray for present and future help. Their confidence is not in themselves but in the God who has proven faithful again and again. The psalm ends by repeating the opening call to give thanks, bookending the whole song with praise.

Why This Matters for Us Today

Psalm 118 teaches us several important truths:

- 1. Thanksgiving is more than saying "thank you."** True thanksgiving involves remembering and telling the story of God's deliverance in detail — the depth of the trouble and the greatness of God's rescue.
- 2. God's love is steadfast.** The same faithful love He showed at the Red Sea is the love He shows us today. Because He has been faithful in the past, we can trust Him with our present troubles.
- 3. The rejected stone becomes the cornerstone.** What the world or even religious leaders may reject, God can lift up and use as the foundation. This is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, but it also encourages us when we feel overlooked or pushed aside.
- 4. Our story connects to God's bigger story.** The psalmist links his personal deliverance to the great story of the exodus. We are invited to do the same — to see how God's work in our lives fits into His greater redemptive plan.

When life feels narrow and we are surrounded by pressures, fears, or opposition, Psalm 118 gives us language for both honest lament and confident hope. We can say with the psalmist: "The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid."

[Source: 10]

Mark 12:1-12 (Sermon Main Text)

JESUS Speaks to the Religious Leaders about their Rejection

Jesus immediately followed up his first clash with the religious leaders by telling parables. Matthew included three (Matthew 21:28–22:14), but Mark included only one. Apparently, all the parables Jesus told on this occasion were linked by a common theme of acceptance/rejection. Jesus confronted the religious leaders with their hard-heartedness.

In the parable of the wicked farmers, Jesus used a strong image of judgment from the Old Testament (Isaiah 5:1–7). Isaiah's ancient poem incriminated Jerusalem by name. The religious leaders immediately heard the charges leveled against them.

The tenant farmers thought they could take the land into their own hands, when all the while they were betraying themselves into someone else's hands. We must not think that we can take some of God's truth and all of his blessings without regarding him as the rightful owner.

12:1 He then began to speak to them in parables. Jesus was presumably still in the temple, where the representatives of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish supreme court) had come to question him. They had failed in their first attempt at tricking Jesus into an answer that would condemn him (11:27–33).

Here Mark recorded that Jesus began to speak to them in parables. Parables are story illustrations that use something familiar to help us understand something new. This method of teaching compels listeners to discover truth for themselves. Jesus wants us to understand God's truth for ourselves, applying it personally and obeying it. Merely knowing information is not enough. This particular parable pointedly described the religious leaders who stood before Jesus, showed that Jesus knew their intention to kill him, and warned them of their ultimate punishment for their actions.

“A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey.” The moment Jesus spoke of a vineyard, the well-versed religious leaders would have recognized the correlation with the words of Isaiah 5:1–7, where Isaiah described Israel as a vineyard. Thus, they immediately understood that Jesus was speaking of the nation of Israel in his parable. Isaiah's parable described judgment on Israel; Jesus' parable described judgment too. The vineyard also portrays God's grace. God bypassed Egypt and Assyria and chose Israel as his special people (Psalm 80:7–11; Jeremiah 2:14–21). But Israel turned away from God and rejected his grace.

The situation pictured in this parable was by no means unusual. Galilee had many such estates with absentee owners who had hired tenant farmers to care for the fields and crops. Much land was dedicated to grape vineyards, with wine being one of the major exports of Galilee. The tenant farmers paid their “rent” by giving a portion of the crop to the landowner, who would send servants at harvesttime to collect it. Tensions often arose; records exist of bitter disputes between landowners and their tenants. The angry tenants in Jesus' parable reflected the social upheaval in Palestine at the time.

This was a choice vineyard that required protection. A stone wall protected it from thieving people or animals; a pit collected the juice of the grapes as they were crushed; and a watchtower was a lookout and a shelter for

the grape gatherers. These details provide local color but have no particular allegorical significance. The characters, however, provide the allegory.

The main elements in this parable are (1) the man who planted the vineyard—God, (2) the vineyard—Israel, (3) the tenant farmers—the Jewish religious leaders, (4) the landowner’s servants (12:2)—the prophets and priests who remained faithful to God and preached to Israel, (5) the son—Jesus (12:6), and (6) the others to whom the vineyard was given (12:9)—the Gentiles.

Israel, pictured as a vineyard, was the nation that God had cultivated to bring salvation to the world. The religious leaders not only frustrated their nation’s purpose; they also killed those who were trying to fulfill it. They were so jealous and possessive that they ignored the welfare of the very people they were supposed to be bringing to God. By telling this story, Jesus exposed the religious leaders’ plot to kill him, and he warned them that their sins would be punished.

PERSECUTED PROPHETS (Who the People Rejected)

The Persecuted— The Persecutors— Reason —Result— Reference

Prophets—Jezebel— Jezebel didn’t like to have her evil ways pointed out.—Many prophets were killed.— 1 Kings 18:3–4

Elijah— Ahab and Jezebel— Elijah confronted their sins.— Elijah had to flee for his life.— 1 Kings 18:16–19:2

Elisha— A king of Israel— The king thought Elisha had caused the famine.— Elisha ignored the threatened persecution and prophesied the famine’s end. —2 Kings 6:31

Micaiah— Ahab— Ahab thought Micaiah was stirring up trouble rather than prophesying from God.— Micaiah was thrown into prison.— 2 Chronicles 18:12–26

Hanani— Asa Hanani criticized Asa for trusting in Syria’s help more than in God’s help. —Hanani was thrown in jail. — 2 Chronicles 16:7–10

Zechariah— Joash— Zechariah confronted the people of Judah for disregarding God’s Word.— Zechariah was executed. — 2 Chronicles 24:20–22

Uriah (Urijah)— Jehoiakim— Uriah confronted Jehoiakim about his evil ways. — Uriah was killed.— Jeremiah 26:20–23

Jeremiah— Zedekiah— Zedekiah thought Jeremiah was a traitor for prophesying Jerusalem’s fall. — Jeremiah was thrown in prison, then into a muddy cistern. — Jeremiah 37:1–38:13

John the Baptist— Herod and Herodias— John confronted their adultery. —John was beheaded.— Mark 6:14–29

12:2 “At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.” When the grape harvest came, the absentee landowner sent a servant to collect the “rent” — namely some of the fruit of the vineyard. Generally this amounted to a quarter to a half of the crop, probably in the form of wine, not grapes. In Jesus’ parable, the “servants” that were sent to the tenants refer to the prophets and priests whom God had sent over the years to the nation of Israel.

TELLING STORIES

Telling stories is one of our most effective ways of teaching values, of making a lesson palatable. Would you rather hear a lecture on trust or be engaged by a story with a plot as tempting as chocolate, a climax as soothing as hot cinnamon rolls?

Parents raising children should seize bedtime moments to read stories or just tell them. Pastors should encourage churches with stories that spice up a sermon’s teaching. Jesus told stories when he could have given lectures. Try it yourself, and watch those audiences— young and older— perk up with interest.

12:3 “And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.” The picture of angry tenants beating the landowner’s slave and sending him on his way without any “rent” did not shock Jesus’ audience. The rapidly deteriorating situation in Palestine, with guerrillas fighting for freedom from Rome and bandits rampaging the land, made this an especially poignant parable. The tenants who were entrusted with the care of the vineyard represented the religious leaders who were entrusted with the spiritual care of Israel. But instead of listening to the prophets, God’s “servants,” the religious leadership had mistreated them and had stubbornly refused to listen.

12:4 “Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully.” The first servant returned empty-handed to the landowner. Determined to collect his due, the landowner sent a second servant. This one was treated even more harshly; a wound to the head was a serious injury.

RAW TREATMENT

So maybe these servants represented a wealthy landowner. Maybe the tenants thought these servants were uppity or insensitive to their situation as workers. Yet we cannot excuse the tenants’ behavior. They were not owners; they were permitted to live on and work the land, keeping 75 percent of the produce.

The parable indicts Israel for hurting God’s prophets. It applies to us each time we reject a messenger from God. Have you spurned a friend or spouse who came with a caring word? Have you rejected a minister who had words from God for you?

12:5 “Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed.” The landowner sent still another servant; that servant was murdered. Not to be put off, the landowner continued to send servants, but every servant met harsh treatment. While some were beaten; others were killed.

Jesus could hardly have made his point more clear. Throughout Israel’s history, the leadership constantly rejected the prophets God sent to them, refusing to turn away from idols or to follow God’s guidance. Many of God’s prophets were beaten; others were killed (see the chart, “Persecuted Prophets”). The fact that he sent so many portrays God’s patience, mercy, and loving-kindness.

12:6 “He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’” With all the servants having been mistreated or killed, the landowner had only one messenger left—his beloved son. This son was sent to the tenant farmers to collect the fruit of the vineyard in hopes that the farmers would give the son due honor and respect. This “beloved son” refers to Jesus. This is the same description God used at Jesus’ baptism (1:11) and at the Transfiguration (9:7). The son was sent last of all to the stubborn and rebellious nation of Israel to win them back to God and away from the self-serving religious leadership.

IS GOD NAIVE?

A landowner who loses several servants, then sends his only son, may be accused of closing his eyes to the dangers of the mission. The son, after all, is a land-grabber’s prime target. Getting rid of him clears title for greedy tenants. The landowner should know this.

Why would God send Jesus if the prophets had already been badly treated? Because the mission required it, and love required that the mission be completed.

Next time you feel depressed and sullen, gray and cloudy, as though there’s not much to live for, remember that divine love looked for you. God’s Son came for you.

12:7–8 “But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.”The tenants probably thought that the arrival of the son meant that his father (the landowner) had died. In Palestine at that time, “ownerless” or unclaimed land could be owned by whoever claimed it first. Thus they reasoned that if they killed the son, they could claim the property (the inheritance) as their own. So they killed the son and threw his body over the wall without burial—a horrible indignity in Israel.

Jesus came to call Israel back to God. But the religious leaders, caught up in their positions, wanted to hold on to their power and prestige with the people. Jesus threatened to take that away; they couldn’t match his teaching, his miracles, or his popularity. They thought that killing Jesus was the only way to gain back the respect of the people that seemed to be slipping from their grasp. Notice that Mark made the point that the body was thrown out of the vineyard; therefore, the son was killed in the vineyard. Jesus would be killed in Israel yet outside the walls of Jerusalem as the result of a plot formed by Israel’s religious leaders.

VIOLENCE

The inheritance will be ours. We are shocked that these renters killed the owner’s son with such disregard, ungratefulness, and violence. Yet we do violence to Jesus and his messengers when we think they disrupt our

security, leisure plans, or pleasure. How are we “killing” God’s claim on our time and treasure?

- Are we possessive and murderously resentful when our leisure or pleasure gets bumped for Christian responsibilities?
- Would his return be unwelcome because of the plans that we have made?

12:9 “What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” Jesus then asked his listeners to consider what the landowner would do once he heard of his son’s murder. In Greek, “owner” is kurios, meaning “master”; it was also a title for God (the Lord). In using this word, Jesus was giving a deliberate hint about who the “owner” represented.

Jesus then answered his own question. All agreed that the landowner would come, kill the tenants, and give the vineyard to others who would care for it and pay the rent on time. The answer also reflects Isaiah 5:4–13, in which God spoke of Israel as a vineyard that yielded only wild grapes and thus would be destroyed. But Jesus made a departure from Isaiah’s prophecy. In Isaiah, the vineyard itself (the people of Israel) was at fault; in Jesus’ parable, it was the tenants who angered God—that is, Israel’s religious leadership was at fault.

Over hundreds of years, Israel’s kings and religious leaders had rejected God’s prophets—beating, humiliating, and killing them. Most recently, John the Baptist had been rejected as a prophet by Israel’s leaders (11:30–33). Next Jesus, the beloved Son of God, already rejected by the religious leaders, would be killed. Jesus explained that the Jewish leaders would be accountable for his death because in rejecting the messengers and the Son, they had rejected God himself.

God’s judgment would be spiritual death and the transfer of the privileges of ownership to others, namely, the Gentiles. In Romans 11:25–32, the apostle Paul explained that “a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in” (Romans 11:25 nrsv). In this parable Jesus spoke of the beginning of the Christian church among the Gentiles. God would not totally reject Israel; in ancient times he always preserved a remnant of true believers (see, for example, 1 Kings 19:18). Yet the religious leaders—who should have recognized the Messiah, rejoiced at his arrival, and led the people to him—instead would put him to death.

LOSING THE EDGE

Along with the Bible’s assurances of God’s long-suffering love come warnings that love turns to judgment when we reject God’s message. This is such a warning.

Bible warnings aim straight at us. For the Christian, failure to follow Christ leads to loss of spiritual gifts and a loss of a sense of God’s presence and power. Will God give our responsibilities to others who will use them appropriately? To the person who is not yet a Christian, putting God off leads to spiritual deafness or hardening. Soon that person can’t hear God’s Word at all.

At all times, we must embrace God’s truth eagerly, follow his lead faithfully, and respect the importance of his message daily.

12:10–11 “Have you not even read this Scripture: ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’” Not only was Jesus making the religious leaders the “bad guys” in his parable, he was adding insult to injury by asking them if they had ever read this particular Scripture. Jesus was quoting from Psalm 118:22–23. Psalm 118 was a key part of the Passover service, and all the pilgrims coming to Passover would recite 118:25–26 as they came to Jerusalem. They had been reciting it for years without understanding or applying it (see John 5:39–40). In his quotation,

the “son” of the parable became the “stone” of this prophecy; the “tenant farmers” of the parable became the “builders.”

Like the son who was rejected and murdered by the tenant farmers, Jesus referred to himself as the stone which the builders rejected. The cornerstone was the most important stone in a building, used as the standard to make sure the other stones of the building were straight and level. Israel’s leadership, like the builders looking for an appropriate cornerstone, would toss Jesus aside because he didn’t seem to have the right qualifications. They wanted a political king, not a spiritual one. Yet God’s plans will not be thwarted. One day that rejected stone will indeed become the “cornerstone” with all the right qualifications—for Jesus will come as King to inaugurate an unending kingdom. And he had already begun a spiritual kingdom as the cornerstone of a brand-new “building,” the Christian church (Acts 4:11–12; 1 Peter 2:7). Jesus’ life and teaching would be the church’s foundation.

Among all the Gospel writers, only Mark quoted the words, This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Mark stressed divine intervention and its meaning for God’s people. By quoting from Psalm 118, a passage the Jews took to be messianic, Jesus was, in fact, applying it to himself and claiming to be the Messiah. The religious leaders missed the point, but many of the people accepted Jesus as their promised Messiah and accepted his offer of salvation.

12:12 When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away. We don’t know exactly when during Jesus’ story the truth dawned on the leaders, but when they (the religious leaders, representatives from all the groups of the Sanhedrin, 11:27) realized that they were the wicked people in Jesus’ parable, they wanted to arrest him. Thus far in Jesus’ ministry, the parables had held veiled truths that only believers could understand (4:11–12). The fact that these religious leaders understood the parable and its meaning brings a new tension to Mark’s Gospel, for it appears that Jesus would soon reveal his true identity to everyone.

PRESSURE

Peer pressure influences our behavior, from the foods we eat to the clothes we wear to church. We make a thousand fewer decisions a day because conforming is easier than creating.

Because we feel peer pressure so strongly, choosing our group becomes very important. The crowd we follow will influence how we live.

In this case, religious leaders were influenced by two pressure groups, negatively by their own peers and positively by the crowd they feared. But how many of these leaders rose above their group’s pressure and began to follow Jesus? It is tough to run alone against the wind. Yet we must stand for our faith against indifference, hostility, and rejection.

The crowd in the temple once again protected Jesus from arrest (as in 11:18). The mere presence of all those people, hanging on Jesus’ every word, caused these religious leaders to fear a riot if they were to forcibly take Jesus away. They’d had enough humiliation for one day. A riot would also make them look bad in the eyes of

the Roman government to whom they were accountable for keeping the peace. There was nothing to do but go away somewhere to gather new ideas and think of new questions to try to trap Jesus.

Source: 11

Matthew 7:24-27 – The Wise and Foolish Builders

7:24–25 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.” Jesus’ true followers not only hear His words, but they act on them, allowing His message to make a difference in their lives. The key to this parable (as with all parables) is the central message, not the peripheral details. In this teaching, Jesus explained that His true followers, by acting on His words, are like a wise man who built his house on rock. The one who builds “on rock” is a hearing, responding disciple, not a phony, superficial one. The apostle James would later write, “But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing” (James 1:22–25 NRSV).

WALKIE-TALKIE

Some athletes can “talk” a great game, but that tells you nothing about their athletic skills. And not everyone who talks about heaven belongs to God’s kingdom. Jesus is more concerned about our “walk” than our “talk.” He wants us to do right, not just say the right words. Your house (which represents your life, 7:24) will withstand the storms of life only if you do what is right instead of just talking about it. Some people wonder if they are really Christians. If that’s you—start acting like one. Some people jabber about their intense faith. If that’s you—just show your faith in faithful living.

Practicing obedience builds on the solid foundation of Jesus’ words to weather the storms of life: “The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.” Jesus pictured Palestine’s climate in these words. While there were few rainfalls all year, during the rainy season, heavy rains with excessive flooding could wash away poorly grounded homes. But those houses with their foundations on solid rock would be unaffected by the rising waters and beating winds. When the “storms of life” come (we cannot press the details of the rain, streams, and winds), only the one who builds his or her life on the foundation of Jesus Christ will not fall.

A LITTLE NUDGE

Like a house of cards, the fool’s life crumbles. Most people do not deliberately seek to build on a false or inferior foundation; instead, they just don’t think about their life’s purpose. Many people are headed for destruction, not out of stubbornness but out of thoughtlessness. Part of our responsibility as believers is to help others stop and think about where their lives are headed and to point out the consequences of ignoring Christ’s message. Some people just need a little prodding to come over to Jesus’ side. They have heard the gospel, but they’re not sure or not convinced or not ready. Often they just haven’t met anyone for whom that decision has made a difference.

When you meet someone close to a decision to follow Jesus, give a word of encouragement. Offer to help, to pray, to be there with your friend. Everyone feels a certain spiritual inertia, and your simple word may help overcome it.

7:26–27 “And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand.” In contrast to the wise man (7:24), the foolish man is the person who hears these words of mine and does not act on them. While both the wise man and the foolish man built houses, and while those houses may have even looked identical, only one house would stand the test. Only the man who hears and does God’s word will receive God’s reward. The house built on sand will collapse. “The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” This time when the storms came, the person turned away, life crumbled, and the end was a great crash—final judgment, destruction (7:13–14), separation from God (7:22–23). As character is revealed by fruit (7:20), so faith is revealed by storms. The wise person, seeking to act upon God’s Word, builds to withstand anything. It will be the foundation, not the house, that will determine what happens on the Day of Judgment.

What action did Jesus expect as a result of His words? What “building” did He expect to happen? Radical discipleship—people whose lives revealed the characteristics that He had been describing in this sermon (beginning at 5:1).

The Decision Between Two Builders and Their Destiny (24–27)

“I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.” In Jesus’ illustration of the two builders, each house looked the same from the outside. The real foundation of our life is usually hidden and is only proven in the storm, and we could say that the storms come from both heaven (rain) and earth (floods).

“The article used to denote not an individual rock, but a category—a rocky foundation.” (Bruce)

“The wise and the foolish man were both engaged in precisely the same avocations, and to a considerable extent achieved the same design; both of them undertook to build houses, both of them persevered in building, both of them finished their houses. The likeness between them is very considerable.” (Spurgeon)

“And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on the house.” A storm (rain, floods, wind) was the ultimate in power to generations that didn’t have nuclear weapons. Jesus warns us that the foundations of our lives will be shaken at some time or another, both now (in trials) and in the ultimate judgment before God.

Time and the storms of life will prove the strength of one’s foundation, even when it is hidden. We may be surprised when we see who has truly built upon the good foundation. “At last, when Judas betrayed Christ in the night, Nicodemus faithfully professed him in the day.” (Trapp)

It is better that we test the foundation of our life now rather than later, at our judgment before God when it is too late to change our destiny.

Jesus may have had in mind an Old Testament passage: “When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation.” (Proverbs 10:25)

“Everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them.” Merely hearing God’s Word isn’t enough to provide a secure foundation. It is necessary that we are also doers of His Word. If we are not, we commit

the sin that will surely find us out, the sin of doing nothing (Numbers 32:23)—and great will be our fall. “Wherein lay the second builder’s folly? Not in deliberately seeking a bad foundation, but in taking no thought of foundation ... His fault was not an error in judgment, but inconsiderateness. It is not, as is commonly supposed, a question of two foundations, but of looking to, and neglecting to look to, the foundation.” (Bruce)

“Their misery and calamity shall be the greater, by how much their hopes have been the stronger, the disappointment of their expectations adding to their misery.” (Poole)

Yet no one can read this without seeing that they have not, do not, and will not ever completely do them. Even if we do them in a general sense (in which we should), the revelation of the Kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount drives us back again and again as needy sinners upon our Savior. “The Mount of ethical enunciation reveals the need for the Mount of the Cross.” (Morgan)

Sources: 12

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Sermon Notes:

Week 4 Series: The Sandals of Jesus

“The Cornerstone”

Good morning, everyone... And welcome to those joining us online.

Summer is in full swing, and I pray for all of your vacations and getaways. If you’re on vacation right now, drop a comment and let us know where you are — we’ll see who’s the farthest away. I know one family that’s in Tokyo right now!

We are in our Summer Series titled “The Sandals of Jesus,” and today I’ve titled this sermon “The Cornerstone.”

Quickly, here are the AVC Connections: YouTube... The App — let me know if you are enjoying the App... Facebook... and our Website.

Let’s pray.

This summer we are journeying with Jesus... And everywhere Jesus goes, He heals, He shows compassion, and He transforms people’s lives.

There is a great victory Psalm that Jesus quotes in the Gospels we are going to dive into today. If you have been around the church, you certainly would have heard this Psalm at some point.

I am going to read some of the highlights to this Psalm of Thanksgiving and Triumph. Hear the Word of the Lord:

“Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; his love endures forever...” (Ps 118:1)

“In my anguish I cried to the Lord, and he answered by setting me free. The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can men do to me?” (Ps. 118:5-6)

“All the nations surround me, but in the name of the Lord I cut them off... The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.” (Ps. 118:10-14)

“Shouts of Joy and Victory resound in the tents of the righteous... The Lord’s right hand has done mighty things.” (Ps. 118: 15-16)

The Psalmist declares these words... Which Jesus directly quotes in Matthew 21:42: “The stone the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone; the Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes.” (Ps. 118:22-23) (MT. 21:42)

So, understand there is a marvelous Stone from God that the Builders rejected...

Let me put this whole thing into context for you. Listen, this is titled: The Builders Rejection.

“In the Old Testament, the builders were kings and kingdoms who rejected the Lord. They wanted to reign and rule how they saw fit. Sadly, even the people of God that worshipped our Lord rejected the words of the prophets that God would send forth His message. God was always trying to bring His people back to Him and steer them away from idolatry and pagan practices and lusts.

Elijah said, ‘How long will you waver and worship Baal?’ Isaiah condemned empty rituals and alliances with foreign powers and called for repentance, but the people hardened their hearts and would not listen. Ezekiel declared, ‘The soul who sins is the one who will die,’ but the exiles in Babylon and those in Jerusalem dismissed him as a storyteller.

Yet Psalm 118:22 captures the pattern: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone.’ Through Jesus Christ, this takes on its fullest meaning — the Religious Leaders, the Builders of Israel, rejected the Messiah Himself. What they cast aside, God made the True Cornerstone... Our Rock & Savior Jesus Christ.” (LOGOS Bible / Rev. Standfest)

My Dad was a Master Mason — I'm not talking about the Masonic Temple. He was a skilled tradesman who laid block and brick all across Southeast Michigan.

I remember laying the footings and putting the boards at a precise spot... perfect measurements... pouring the cement at the exact height. After the foundation came the block, and the cornerstones were laid. If the cornerstone was off, the whole wall would be crooked.

Listen to this statement from Theologians Wessel and Strauss concerning the importance of the cornerstone: "In Jesus' day, the cornerstone wasn't a decorative plaque — it was the single most critical stone in the entire building. In large-scale architecture Masons would examine many stones and choose only the one that was true, strong, and perfectly suited — often rejecting others that didn't measure up.

That chosen stone became the reference point for everything else. This master stone served as the literal standard of alignment: every other stone in the foundation and walls had to line up perfectly with its angle, level, and straightness. It also bore the heavy load where the walls intersected, anchoring the whole structure so it wouldn't shift or collapse. If the cornerstone was ever slightly off, the entire building would be crooked and unstable."

PP Jerusalem Wall PP Capernaum Wall PP Cornerstone

Let's turn in our Bibles to our main text to bring this all together.

[Read Mark 12:1-12]

This is Jesus talking to the Religious Leaders — the Builders of the Religious System.

The main and final question I want to answer for us this morning is this: What does the Cornerstone and Christ's message mean for our lives?

Let's answer that by reading this powerful closing text that puts it all together again... from Jesus' mouth.

[Read Matthew 7:24-27]

I'm not going to take extra time this morning, but I've put some Spiritual Applications for our lives in the APP.

Spiritual Application

1. Build Your Life on the Unshakable Foundation

Just as a house built on rock withstands the storms (Matthew 7:24-27), make Jesus Christ your Cornerstone and firm foundation every single day. When pressures come — financial, relational, or health-related — you will stand firm because you are anchored to the One who never shifts. Start each morning by declaring, "Jesus, You are my Rock."

2. Align Every Area of Life to Christ

In ancient construction, everything had to line up with the cornerstone or the whole building would be crooked. Examine your decisions, priorities, and habits this week. Ask the Holy Spirit: "Am I aligned with Jesus?" Small daily choices to obey His Word will keep your life straight and strong.

3. Trust God’s Reversal Power

The stone the builders rejected became the Cornerstone (Psalm 118:22-23). God specializes in taking what others dismiss — your past mistakes, weaknesses, or seasons of rejection — and making it valuable in His kingdom. Take heart: what feels like rejection today can become the very thing God uses for His glory.

4. Respond to God’s Messengers with Openness

The parable in Mark 12:1-12 warns us against rejecting the voice of God through Scripture, pastors, wise counsel, or the Holy Spirit. Cultivate a soft heart that welcomes correction and conviction. God sends messengers because He loves you and wants to draw you closer to Himself.

5. Practice Radical Obedience, Not Just Hearing

Jesus makes it clear: it is not enough to hear His words — we must put them into practice (Matthew 7:24). Pick one specific teaching from the Sermon on the Mount or this series and apply it this week. Obedience turns hearing into a rock-solid foundation that survives life’s floods.

6. Live with Thankful Confidence

Psalm 118 overflows with thanksgiving even in the middle of battle: “The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid.” Cultivate a lifestyle of gratitude and bold trust. No matter what nations or circumstances surround you, God’s steadfast love endures forever and His right hand does mighty things.

7. Be a Living Stone in God’s Building

You are not just resting on the Cornerstone — you are being built together with other believers into a spiritual house (Ephesians 2:20-22). Invest in your church family, encourage someone who feels rejected, and live as a witness so that others see the stability only Jesus provides. Together we stand strong because Christ is our Cornerstone.

Closing Prayer

Devotional Questions:

These questions draw from the key texts (Psalm 118:22-23, Mark 12:1-12, Matthew 21:42, and Matthew 7:24-27) and the rich historical/architectural background of the cornerstone metaphor. They encourage looking up additional passages, historical context, and writing personal comments or reflections in the app.

1. The Rejected Stone Becomes Chosen

Read Psalm 118:22-23 and compare it with Matthew 21:42 and Mark 12:10-11. In the historical context of ancient Israelite and Near Eastern building practices, why was the cornerstone so critical (see the description of pinnah/akrogōniaios and ancient masonry techniques)? How does the pattern of rejection in the Old Testament (prophets, Israel’s leaders) find fulfillment in Jesus? What “rejected stones” in your own life has God elevated?

2. The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

Study Mark 12:1-12 alongside Isaiah 5:1-7 (the vineyard song). Identify the main characters in the parable (owner, tenants, servants, son) and their historical parallels in Israel’s story. How does this parable reveal God’s patience with His people and the seriousness of rejecting His

3. Jesus as the Firm Foundation

Reflect on Matthew 7:24-27 (the wise and foolish builders). How does Jesus position Himself as the “Rock” in contrast to other foundations people build upon (career, relationships, self-effort, or even religious tradition)?

4. Alignment to the Cornerstone

Explore Ephesians 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2:4-8, which expand the cornerstone image. In ancient construction, everything had to align to the cornerstone or the building would be crooked. Where in your daily decisions do you notice misalignment with Jesus? Use a journal or app comment to list areas needing realignment and one verse to anchor them.

5. The Paradox of the Stone

Compare Psalm 118:22 with Isaiah 28:16 (precious cornerstone) and Isaiah 8:14 (stone of stumbling). How can the same Jesus be both a firm foundation for believers and a stone that causes others to stumble? Write a comment about a time Christ felt like a stumbling block versus a sure foundation in your journey.

6. Rejection by the Builders

In Mark 12, the religious leaders (the “builders”) reject the son and the stone. How does this mirror earlier rejections of prophets (Elijah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist)? What modern “builders” or systems today risk rejecting Christ’s authority? Pray for courage to stand as the psalmist did: “The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid” (Psalm 118:6). Comment on a personal application.

7. From Personal Deliverance to Communal Hope

Psalm 118 moves from individual rescue (“narrow place” to “spacious place”) to communal worship and cries of “Hosanna.” Connect this to Jesus as Cornerstone of the church (Ephesians 2:20). How does building your life on Christ strengthen not just you but the wider body of believers? Look up Zechariah 4:7 or Daniel 2:34-35 for additional “stone” imagery in Israel’s history. Write about how your story fits into God’s bigger redemptive narrative.

8. Hearing and Doing

Jesus closes the Sermon on the Mount with the builders parable (Matthew 7:24-27), emphasizing action over mere hearing (see also James 1:22-25). Research how this echoes Old Testament calls to obedience (e.g., Deuteronomy 28 or Joshua 1). In what areas of life—family, work, church leadership, or personal habits—do you need to move from hearing to doing Christ’s words? Set one specific, measurable step and share progress in the app comments.

9. Living as Living Stones

From 1 Peter 2:4-10, believers are “living stones” being built into a spiritual house with Christ as cornerstone. Explore this imagery in light of ancient temple construction (Herod’s Temple cornerstones) and its fulfillment in the New Testament church. How does this change how you view your role in the church and community? Contrast with other religious or philosophical “foundations” in history. End with a commitment: “Lord, align my life fully to You, the Cornerstone.” Post your reflections and a favorite verse.