

Holy Week

(Part 1) Deadly Difficulty

This is Holy Week, from Sunday to Sunday. It was a packed week of events that includes the Triumphal Entry, the clash with Israel’s leaders, the last supper, Gethsemane, the betrayal, the arrest, two trials, one Jewish for religious reasons, one Roman for political reasons, then the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. In and around all of these events are full chapters of dialogue and teaching. There is so much detail recorded about this particular week that it takes up a disproportionately large amount of space in the Gospels.

	PAGES																																		
Matthew	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32			
Mark	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20															
Luke	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	
John	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25										

33% Percentage of the Gospels is about the week from Palm Sunday Triumphal entry to Resurrection Sunday!

What happened in this one week eclipses everything else in terms of importance. It isn’t until “Holy Week” is accomplished that the Gospel (good news) is available. The Gospel explains who Jesus is, what he has done, why he died and rose from the dead, and what all of this means for us!!

We begin a mini series on Holy Week today and will cover only two events, one from **Tuesday** to help us understand the conflict, and one from **Sunday** which puts everything back together for us so that we can actually see the evil and terrible events of the worst Friday ever, as actually good Friday, God delivering us from everything bad, and giving us everything good. This is the Good News.

Today is Palm SUNDAY; the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem as king, the long anticipated Christ/Messiah who would deliver them and set them free. Today is not our focus day. Today we focus on CONFLICT TUESDAY.

Already by MONDAY, Jesus’ revolution began against Rome as expected but in the house of God, in their own Temple. He overturned the money changing tables and accused Israel’s leaders of turning God’s house into a den of thieves!

Mark’s Gospel, summarizes:

***Mark 11:18 (NIV)** The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him...*

Today is about CONFLICT TUESDAY as they come to Jesus loaded for bear. *How dare this man Jesus treat their temple as though he owned it! Who does he think he is!?*

They set many trapping questions, which Jesus handles masterfully. At every turn the religious leader's hypocrisy is exposed.

Our main text is Mark 12:1-12. A **parable** followed by a **prophecy**. Jesus shows who is in control, who has **authority**, and **who is really on trial**.

Mark 12:1–5 (NIV) Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: “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 moved to another place. ² At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. ³ But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴ Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. ⁵ He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.

The story is not hard to follow. It is their history. They are very familiar with the Vineyard metaphor for Israel, from Isaiah 5. Israel is God's vineyard. He planted it. He protected it. He has a purpose for it. Who are the thieves? He sent prophet after prophet to turn his people around so that they would bear fruit? These prophets were abused and killed. But rather than judge them for it, he does an unexpected thing.

Mark 12:6 (NIV) “He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

These leaders were already angry having heard Jesus continuously refer to God as Father, so intimately. Jesus openly exposes what is going on for the entire listening crowd to become aware. This conflict is a deadly one. These leaders already refused to answer the question about the authority of John the Baptist, as they hid from the crowd their obvious rejection of John's authority having come from God, which the people believed. Now this same conflict is being openly played out in their view of Jesus. This is brilliant!

But what does it mean for all of us, not just them, or the crowd back then?

I. The sent Son was AMAZING grace.

The story of the sent Son in the context of this story seems like the Father is foolish. They have already abused and killed the servants he sent, why would he send his Son. He could have judged them immediately instead?

Please note what Jesus knows.

- He knows his own identity as the Son.
- He knows the vineyard and the Temple belong to him. (His authority over them and the Temple is the context for this story)
- He knows they are going to reject and kill him.

While they were scheming secretly, Jesus exposed their plans openly. He lets everyone know what is going on, and he lets everyone know that he knows. This is their last chance to repent.

This is AMAZING GRACE.

II. **And (yet) the sent Son was (also) God's ULTIMATUM.**

This story was not a hypothetical story. This story is being played out in real time even in the telling.

Mark 12:7 (NIV) "But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'

The story begs us to ask these questions:

- "Why would the Father send the son?"
- "Why would the people kill the son he sent?"
- "Aren't they afraid of retribution?"
- "What were they thinking!?"
- "Why this gamble?"

The story gives us this hint: *'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'*

They must be thinking since the Son, the only heir, came, the Father is dead! Or if not, soon will be.

The land will be up for grabs to those who have worked it. (a legal possibility under circumstances with no heirs)

Pause the story a moment: In the story they want to believe that the OWNER is dead, and that there is no other OWNER. As far as the story shows. Clearly act as if they want GOD to be dead so they can call their own shots.

Don't we all play some kind of "God is dead" lie when we want to call our own shots outside of God's authority?

- "No one will ever know"
- "Nothing bad will happen. Nothing happened before."

BUT GOD IS NOT DEAD. GOD KNOWS. GOD IS HOLY, and judgment will happen.

Mark 12:8-9 (NIV) So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. 9 "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.

What we do with the sent SON is GOD's ULTIMATUM.

III. **Rejecting the sent Son brings JUDGMENT**

The most interesting thing to me about Jesus' parable is that it does not stop here.

Mark 12:10-12 (NIV) Haven't you read this passage of Scripture: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; 11 the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?" (Psalm 118:22-23) 12 Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders

looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

“They knew he had spoken the parable against them.” They were right.

This is brilliant! But do we understand how brilliant this is?!

For us, the parable’s transition connecting a rejected “son” to a rejected “stone” seems like it came out of left field. Maybe it did to them as well. However, they understand a few things that we miss. Jesus is using a powerful wordplay connection between the “rejected son” and the “rejected stone”. It is one we can’t see in the English translation, or the Greek. It is a Hebrew wordplay, and one these leaders were already familiar with.

The Hebrew word for “son” is a “*ben*”.
The Hebrew word for “stone” is “*eben*”.

This wordplay appears repeatedly in their ancient Aramaic commentaries on the Hebrew Texts (known as the “Targums”, or “Targumaic literature”). In these commentaries they interpreted the wordplay this way. The “rejected son” was David as a young boy. He was too young to be noticed and almost missed out on the anointing Samuel came to bring. Though he was rejected like a “rejected stone” he became the gold standard for all Kings of Israel! And the Messiah was going to be in his lineage. But **Jesus brings something new**, this is not in retrospect about David, this is a prophecy about himself. Jesus will be rejected and killed, and yet...he will become the cornerstone. This conclusion forms a prophecy and a riddle. Let’s put the riddle this way:

How can a rejected son who is killed become the chief cornerstone?

Ahh. Now you get what Jesus already knew. He already knew he would be rejected and killed, but this was all according to plan. He would be raised and he would become the Cornerstone.

The rejected son will become the cornerstone of God’s New Covenant, and his New Temple!

IV. Accepting the sent Son brings ALIGNMENT

Accepting the sent Son brings God’s ACCEPTANCE in ALIGNMENT with His Son.

Many skeptics today still put Jesus and Christianity on trial. Jesus and Christianity are not on trial, we all are! God’s ultimatum is this. Accept the Son and align with him, or face the judgment that justice demands for our sinful rebellion against God.

Skeptics today assume Jesus didn’t make such claims. He did, or he would not have been crucified. It was for such audacious claims that Jesus was crucified. But it is because his claims were true that he was raised, and a movement exploded in history immediately after his crucifixion.

What are you going to do with Jesus and his claims? I suggest we all bow in worship, accept him and align our lives to him. Those of us who have done so, accepted him, he fills, and aligns us to become his Spirit filled dwelling place. God is with us. We have become his new Temple.

Join the countless people who enjoy what it is like to be filled with God's Spirit, his resurrection power, to bring us back in alignment with God and his will. Experience his love, acceptance, and forgiveness, and his power, peace, and joy to live out a life that has been put back in order. Be blessed to be a blessing to others.

Holy Week (Part 1) Deadly Difficulty

SMALL TALK

1. When have you ever been cheated out of something that was rightfully yours?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Mark 12:1-6.** Whom do the farmer, servants, and son in the parable represent?
3. Why did the owner of the vineyard send so many servants to the tenants looking after the vineyard?
4. **READ Mark 7:8-9.** How did the tenants treat the owner's son? Why? How did the vineyard owner respond?
5. **READ Mark 7:10-12.** How did quoting Psalm 118:22-23 complete the story? How did the religious leaders respond?

GETTING PERSONAL

6. How do you make Jesus feel welcome in your life each day? What actions might make him feel unwelcome?
7. Does Jesus feel more like a millstone (weighing you down), cornerstone (aligning everything else), or capstone (holding everything together) in your life?

PRACTICE!

8. What might you do differently this week to honor Jesus for what he did that Holy Week?