

# The Stone of God; Foundation or a Fall

Matthew 21:33-46

**MPS** Jesus is God's Son sent to bring forgiveness of sin and righteousness to all who believe.

**OBJ** Every person can recognize whether they believe in Jesus to follow Him by Three Questions.

**READ** Matthew 21:33-46

*"Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. <sup>34</sup> When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. <sup>35</sup> And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup> Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. <sup>37</sup> Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' <sup>38</sup> But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' <sup>39</sup> And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. <sup>40</sup> When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" <sup>41</sup> They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."*

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?"

<sup>43</sup> Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.

<sup>44</sup> And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

<sup>45</sup> When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.

<sup>46</sup> And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

**Matthew 21:33-46**

Jesus' confrontation with the religious leaders continues and intensifies. What began by Him not answering their question(.27), because He knew their motive, has now become Him exposing their rebellious hearts. And like water on a dirt floor, when God's Word through the gospel washes over the dirty sin of a person's life it produces one of two effects; it either softens in faith unto repentance or hardens into further rebellion. Jesus teaches one parable after another to answer questions they have not asked because the hardness of their heart from religious righteousness and pride would not recognize God's revelation of His Messiah.

**Jesus teaches another parable of rebellious tenants.** A man started a business of great investment by planting a vineyard, installing a fence, digging a winepress, and placing a tower to lease it to tenants. Once leased, he went to another country. When harvest season came, he sent his servants to collect compensation for his investment. The tenants did not treat the servants kindly. They beat one, killed one, and stoned another. The man sent other servants, and more this time than the first, but they did the same thing to them. Graciously giving the benefit of the doubt, he decides that he will send his own son, thinking they will respect his son differently than the servants. But when the tenants saw the son, they reasoned that if they killed him too then they would be able to get his inheritance. So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him too. Jesus then asks the religious leaders what they think the owner will do to the tenants when he comes. Indignant, they respond, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."(.41) This had to be the most obvious answer not only to the religious leaders, but to all who heard the parable. And, to any who would read it today.

**TRANS** As anyone could obviously recognize, this is not a hard question to answer. The difficulty is not in knowing the answer, but in the answer itself, and understanding what the parable is really teaching.

Jesus responds by citing Psalm 118:22, 23, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" How dare Jesus ask this! He was speaking to men who were experts in the Scriptures. Of course they had read the Scriptures and knew full well the Psalm he cited! But the level of angst in them to His question only proved the severity of his point, that they had perfected their knowledge of the Scriptures while missing the whole point of the One to whom they bear witness, Jesus.(John 5:39)



Jesus then states, “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. <sup>44</sup>And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.” His sharp words form a piercing rebuke to the religious leaders that implicates them as “guilty tenants” under God’s judgment.

**Why is this rebuke and God’s judgment so harsh?** Again, Jesus makes reference to reveal Himself as the Son of God, but they don’t see this because they reject Him. Throughout history, God sent His messengers to foretell of the coming of His Messiah. And one after another, the people rejected them, choosing instead personal comforts, preferences, pleasures, and to go their own way. (John 1:11) The religious leaders believed in God’s Messiah who would come, but they were so committed to their constructed image of the Messiah, primarily through a religious system, that they were blind to the true Messiah. Jesus warns, “the stone rejected that became the cornerstone” is the one upon which those who fall are broken to pieces, by rejecting Jesus as God’s Messiah, or crushed when it falls upon them, at the final judgment.

**Jesus is God’s Son sent to bring forgiveness of sin and righteousness to all who believe.**

The lesson of Jesus’ parable is simple, but it is not easy. And the chief priests and Pharisees know this. They “perceived that he was speaking about them.” (Well, hello Sherlock Holmes!) The parable did nothing to cool their hatred of him, only to exacerbate their situation. They remained caught between wanting to arrest him and fearing the crowds. Therefore, in the hardness of their heart, they would have to devise a better plan to accomplish this goal.

**Believing in Jesus as God’s Son sent as Messiah, to forgive sin and bring righteousness, is the single issue of life.**

Jesus makes clear that He is God’s Son sent as Messiah to fulfill all the promises of God. He tells us that there is no other way to God. Jesus says “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6) Religion is helpless and useless without the revelation of God in Jesus Christ at the center. And self-righteousness is hopeless without the atoning sacrifice of Jesus to forgive and cleanse one of their sin. Therefore, no matter what you do, you will never achieve nor accomplish enough to earn the favor of God. And no matter how good you become, you will never be good enough to overcome your sinful nature to be righteous before God. Every person in their sin stands before God without excuse. (Romans 1:20) The single issue of life begins with one **Key Recognition** about self that every person must acknowledge: **There is nothing one can do nor anything the world offers to alleviate the weight of sinful guilt, to cleanse the shame of sin’s soul-stain, nor remove one’s condemnation from unrighteousness before God.**

**Q?** But many say, “**But I thought God loved me?**” He does, “For God so loved the world...,” (John 3:16) the gospel of John states. And His love is so great, far too great to leave you eternally condemned in your sin. So because of His love, the gospel declares, “...that He gave His only Son,”! God loved sinners so much He sent His only Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sin. “Great, then...”, some will say, “...that settles it.” But that does not settle it. Believing that God sent His Son, even believing that His Son was God, does not settle it. Even the demons believe this, but that does nothing for them. Believing something about God or what He has done does not alter sin’s condemnation on you at all. The gospel of John continues, “...that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” A person must believe in Jesus, not simply about Him, so that they place their faith in His death as the atoning sacrifice for their sin to be forgiven and cleansed, and made right with God. To believe and place your faith in Jesus means that you denounce and reject every other and any other way to trust in Jesus only and completely. Because as the religious leaders testified the tenants were worthy of, and Jesus testifies “the stone of God” will accomplish, all who reject Jesus Christ will perish eternally in their sin because they rejected the One God sent as Messiah, Jesus Christ! Every person will either believe in Jesus as Lord, to be the cornerstone of their life for eternity, or they will be crushed by the “stone” they stumble over in rejecting Jesus.

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**The ISSUE: Who is Jesus, the stone of your life’s foundation as Lord, or the stone on which you stumble?** Another way to ask is this: **What or WHO are you trusting for your life; your love, adoration, and affections, your time and energy, your resource, recreation, even your worries, fears, anxieties, hurts and wounds?** Jesus is either the foundation of your life



or He is the rock on which you stumble and fall. He is either your everything, First as Lord, or He is nothing to you, no matter how you may try to use Him in life. **Jesus is the only way to be made right with God.**

**OBJ Three Questions to discern what you are doing with Jesus in your life.**

**1. Have I put my faith in Jesus to repent of sin for forgiveness and cleansing, or am I still trying to earn or achieve?**

I begin with this question because, as every Christ-follower knows, it is first that must be addressed. Every person is working to rid their life of their sin, working to find that fundamental contentment and satisfaction of life, to throw off that lingering weight of burden or wash away the shame we feel. But no matter how well something works at first, and even for some time, it never lasts. All of these things are the result of one aspect of our being, our unrighteousness from sin and alienation from Gods, our Creator and glory for all of life. Nothing in nor from this world, nor from within us, can adequately or fully address this issue. That's why God sent Jesus to come and die, to atone for our sin and give us His righteousness. By Jesus' sacrifice on the cross He not only earned the right, but conquered sin, death, Hell and the grave, so He could give to us His righteousness. **Believing to place your faith in Jesus identifies His death as payment for your sin and receives His righteousness as a gift so you can walk with God daily by the presence of Holy Spirit.**

**TRANS** Believing in Jesus means receiving God's gift of eternal life that is free, but that doesn't make following God easy.

**2. How do I respond to God's Word, do I humble myself to obey God's Word through the gospel, or does it harden me more in my own understanding and rightness against God?**

Life with God is one of faith in His revealed truth through His Word, the Bible. God has not left us to figure it out on our own, but to walk into an ever-increasing and ever-deepening understanding of Who He is, a mind being renewed by the truth of His Word, so we can walk in His Will for our life. **Life with God is a life IN His Word.**

**To walk with Jesus, you have to know the Word so that it is working in you.** The question is NOT simply "Do you know what it says?", but "Do you know the One it reveals?" God's Word reveals for us a person of perfect righteousness, not for us to strive to become, but One who is worthy of all glory, who is worthy of all our faith. And to this revealed person who is worthy, we humble ourselves to walk in obedience by faith in the light of His truth. When we trust to obey His Word, we are made more and more into His likeness. The tenants rejected the landowner's servants, to ultimately kill His Son, because they rejected Him. In the same way, one cannot reject God's Word nor refuse to trust and obey while claiming to love God. John says when we do this, we lie to deceive ourselves. (1 John 1:6-7) **You have to trust God's Word to walk in the light of His Truth.**

**TRANS** As we trust to walk in obedience to God's Word, we often struggle. So God gives us others to help.

**3. How do I relate to walk in unity with God's people: am I walking in unity with others to serve and build up, or do I stay distant to serve or protect self-interests?**

When God saves a person, He brings them into His people. The concept of individualized Christianity is opposed to God's will for a person's life. God gives every Christian to the fellowship of His people for the person and for His people. There is no Biblical account that teaches or even infers otherwise. When we are saved by God's love, we are given to His people to express that love. God came near to love us. We must live near to love as He leads. Life with God is encumbent upon living in fellowship with His people to fulfill the full glory of His being and the full measure of His mission in this world. **You can't love from a distance; love demands proximity because it produces intimacy.**

**CLOSE** Jesus is either the foundation for your whole life as Lord, or He is the stone upon which you fall and falter, and will ultimately one day, fall upon to crush you in judgment. Jesus will either be your Savior, or He will be your sentencer. You will either hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into my rest for you." Or you will hear, "Depart from me into eternal torment and suffering, I never knew you." **Where do you need to begin today, to take that next step to build your life on Jesus as Lord, the cornerstone of God for your life?**

