

Lesson 78 – THE REJECTED STONE

Matthew 21:33-46

(Matt. 21:33) – *“HEAR ANOTHER PARABLE”* – The timing of this parable is critical because the Good Shepherd is just a few days away from laying down His life for His sheep. Recall that He had made His entrance into Jerusalem on Monday while the crowds shouted, “hosanna to the Son of David.” On Tuesday, He entered the temple and drove out the moneychangers and those who sold animals to be sacrificed for the Passover. Now it is Wednesday and He is in the temple teaching God’s Word.

Recall that the Pharisees and elders at the temple challenged Christ as to His authority to make such claims and to preach such a message. His response took the form of two parables, the withered fig tree, and this one, the parable of the wicked husbandmen. Both parables set forth how the Gospel was first sent to the Jews (Rom. 1:16; Matt. 15:24), but the majority rejected the message of salvation by God’s free grace in Christ. Their refusal to receive the truth resulted in the Gospel being sent to the Gentiles. The unbelief of some did not frustrate the purpose of God (Rom. 3:1-4). God will save all His chosen people, Jew and Gentile (Rev. 5:9). Christ broke down the walls of division between believing Jews and Gentiles and made for Himself one glorious church (Eph. 2:11-32). In Christ Jesus, *“there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor*

free”. The *“CERTAIN HOUSEHOLDER”* is the Lord God of heaven Who *“PLANTED A VINEYARD,”* which is the nation Israel whom He chose and through whom He would bring the Messiah into the world. He *“PLANTED A VINEYARD”* and *“HEDGED [THEM] ROUND ABOUT”* by giving them the land of promise and preserving them from their enemies in the appointed time. He *“DIGGER A WINEPRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER”* by giving them the truth and the worship of the tabernacle which pictured Christ in the Gospel. He *“let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country”* when He left it to the prophets, priests, and kings to lead the people the ways of the Lord.

(Matt. 21:34-36) – God sent them faithful prophets and priests who taught the people the truth. There were also false prophets and ungodly priests among the people. The majority of the people rejected and persecuted the true witnesses of God. As the time drew near for the coming of the Messiah, the sinfulness of the people grew much worse as the majority rejected and persecuted the true preachers of righteousness and grace. We see again that by nature, they hated and rejected the truth of God’s grace in salvation (John 3:19-20; 15:18—16:3). This is all of us by nature (Rom. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:14), and this is why we are so thankful for God’s saving grace to save us from our sins and ourselves.

(Matt. 21:37-39) – Though the true witnesses of Christ had been rejected, the Lord God, according to His sovereign purpose and will, sent *“HIS SON,”* the Lord Jesus Christ into

the world to save His chosen people from their sins (Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-6; Matt. 1:21,23; Gal. 4:4-6). Christ was not received by His own nation (John 1:11). None will ever receive Him apart from the effectual work of the Holy Spirit in giving them spiritual life and making them willing to be saved by His grace and power alone (John 1:12-13 6:44-45; cf. Psa. 110:3). Sinners must be convicted by the Spirit and made willing to be saved through the bloody sacrifice of Christ alone and made comely through the righteousness of Christ alone imputed to them (Rom. 1:1 6-17; John 16:8-11). Although the majority rejected Him and sought to murder Him, this did not frustrate the purpose and will of God. Christ was the *“the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world”* (Rev. 13:8; cf. Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:18-20). Sinful men meant it for evil, but *“God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive”* (Gen. 50:20).

(Matt. 21:40-41) – We know that the Savior died on the cross by Divine appointment to save the people of God’s sovereign choice (Heb. 2:9-17). Nevertheless, natural Israel, along with Gentiles, must bear the guilt of their sins (Acts 4:27-28). But here, *“THE VINEYARD”* does refer to natural Israel as they were so privileged by God to be the people through whom the Messiah would come in His sinless humanity (Rom. 1:1-4). Israel refused to receive and believe Christ, the Incarnate Word. Like the withered fig tree and the disobedient son, the Lord cursed Israel and removed the Gospel from them, sending this glorious message to His elect among the Gentile nations. We know from God’s Word that He still had and has a remnant of His people among the Jews, but they are saved by His grace and will be brought to believe in Christ as their whole salvation (Rom. 9:22-26; 11:1-12).

(Matt. 21:42-44) – Christ is the Stone that the builders rejected. He quotes from Psalm 118:22-23, showing their ignorance of the Scriptures (Matt. 22:29). Christ is the foundation stone laid by God upon Whom the church is built (Isa. 28:16; Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:11). Whoever believes in Christ builds upon this sure foundation stone and will discover that nothing will separate us from Him (Rom. 8:28-39). Though the unbelieving Jews disallowed this Stone, *“this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes!”* This refers to all who have seen the glory of Christ and to whom HE IS PRECIOUS (1 Pet. 2:4-9). All who refuse to believe stumble over this Stone and will be broken under the just wrath of Almighty God.

(Matt. 21:45-46) – The lost religious leaders understood that Christ spoke of them in these parables. And when, in their hatred and anger, they sought to arrest and put Him to death, being in fear of the people who *“TOOK HIM FOR A PROPHET,”* they stopped. We know that it was the hand of Almighty God that stopped them as it was not yet time for Him to be arrested, tried, and crucified. God’s appointed time would come soon enough, and it was all for the salvation of His people, both Jew and Gentile.