

"The Stones Amidst Judgment"—Mark 13:1-2

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, "The Stones Amidst Judgment", is Mark 13:1-2 → *As He came out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

As a child I remember hearing a story about three little pigs. One pig built his house of straw, another built his out of sticks and the third built his out of brick. When the big bad wolf came along and tried to catch the pigs for a tasty meal each of them retreated to their own house for security. However, he was able to huff and puff and blow the houses of straw and sticks down to the ground. These two little pigs ran to the third pig's brick house and found the security they needed against the wolf's attacks. Ultimately, they were able to "do in" the wolf and live happily ever after . . . or so the story goes. But what about the rest of the story?

Now that the three little pigs had been delivered from danger they all built their own brick houses. In those houses they felt secure. They became lazy and arrogant, fearing nothing in the security of what their hands had built. They were constantly seeking for ways to entertain themselves inside their fortresses, having no regard for others. They became very self-centered, believing themselves to be self-sufficient and even invincible. Until one day a great earthquake came and shook their houses so much that they crumbled to the ground like dust, leaving them humbled, unprotected and helpless.

I wonder if the disciples didn't have their "security" shaken when Jesus taught them about the stones of the temple amidst God's judgment upon sin. During Holy Week—the week beginning with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey and ending on Easter Sunday—Jesus spent much time in the temple. There He drove the money-changers and sellers out of the temple. He encountered the religious leaders who questioned His authority in an effort to find "valid" grounds upon which to kill Him. In return, Jesus responded with much teaching about their rejection of Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God, even referring to Himself as *the stone that builders rejected*. (cf. Mark 12:10)

When leaving the temple His disciples were "taking in the sites" and commented to Jesus in verse 1 of our text: *Look, Teacher, what wonderful*

stones and what wonderful buildings! They marveled at the magnificence of Herod the Great's temple which he began building in about 19 BC and was still under construction at this time. It wasn't completed until about 64 AD. They had good reason to marvel over the stones used to build this temple. Josephus, the historian of Jesus' day, reported some of these stones to measure 37 feet long, 18 feet wide, and 12 feet high, and decorated with gold! Certainly a "must stop" for every tourist in Jerusalem!

However, the "weight" of such massive stones was nothing in comparison with the "weight" of Jesus' response to His disciples' statement in verse 2 → *Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.* With such massive stones in this complex of buildings Jesus' statement is even more unbelievable. It appears to be a statement about the destruction of the temple not just by toppling the stone structure but a complete devastation of it! How could it be possible for such massive stones to be "thrown down?" This seemed an impossibility with a structure so solid! Hearing about the utter ruin of their temple and capital city, this may have also been disheartening to His disciples if they still had very nationalistic views about Christ's kingdom and the part they would play in that earthly kingdom! Their security would have been shaken again.

Naturally such a statement "wet their appetite" for more clarification. This

“site seeing” led Jesus into teaching about Judgment Day at His 2nd Coming. However, in the midst this teaching He also spoke of the destruction of this temple and Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD. According to one commentary the Romans did such a thorough job of destroying the temple that it’s exact location is disputed to this day! However, what Jesus said would happen to the temple was symbolical of what is in store for the unbelieving world in general on Judgment Day.

Yahweh’s temple was the place where He met with His people as they met Him in repentance, sacrifices and worship. His presence was in the Holy of Holies with the ark of the covenant in which the high priest entered once a year to sacrifice for the sins of the whole nation. The temple represented God’s presence **amongst** His people. The sacrifices offered at the temple actually prefigured or looked forward to the need for Yahweh’s presence which alone could deal with the judgment of sin once and for all. Hebrews 10:11-14 says: *Every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God . . . For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.* The temple’s presence and sacrifices “spoke” about the incarnation —God taking on human form in the Person of Jesus.

Aside from ending all temple worship and sacrifice, its destruction was actually bound up in the judgment upon sin and deliverance from sin which could only happen in the Person & Work of Jesus. Jesus was God's presence amongst His people to bring about judgment upon sin with justice and secure forgiveness and eternal salvation for all people. Jesus had referred to this judgment in John 2:19 when He told the religious leaders: *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*—referring to the death and resurrection of His body. It was in the death of His “temple” (i.e. His body) when the ultimate judgment upon all sin for all people for all time had been met in pure justice. It was in the resurrection of His “temple” (i.e. His body) when the ultimate victory over death was gained for all who believe in Jesus!

Where is your secure place in life? People are constantly seeking for something “solid” upon which they can depend in life, including a solid foundation for the security of their salvation. But where do they look? Some look to their own conclusions about God. However, God's Word shakes their security in Psalm 14:1 → *The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”*

Some look to their nationalistic ideals and political figures. Even after Jesus' death and resurrection His disciples still saw Him as their nationalistic deliverer, reflected in their question to Jesus: *Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?* (cf. Acts 1:6) Nationalism is also a false security.

Some look to their religious ritualistic faithfulness. Their security in their relationship with the LORD is based on the “foundations of faith” which they think they have built to support themselves, such as faithfulness, religious attendance, proper forms and so forth. God’s Word shakes their security in Matthew 15:8-9 → *This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me; in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.* Still others look to their good works and moral character as a good foundation for security in this life and eternal life. God’s Word shakes their security in Galatians 5:4 → *You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.* Like the stones of Herod’s great temple these “stones” will also not endure the judgment of God on the Last Day.

There is only one “Rock” upon which you will find a solid security for your salvation amidst the judgment upon sin—Jesus. Repent and trust in the Person & Work of Jesus, the only “Rock” which has endured God’s judgment upon sin for you while on the cross. In Him you have the only secure foundation in life now and eternally. Amen.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. (Psalm 118:22-23)