

Stumbling Block or Cornerstone?

Hear the prophets foretell Christ the cornerstone:

He will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.
(Isaiah 8:14, NIV)

The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this.
(Psalm 118:22-23, NIV)

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I lay a stone . . . a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed."
(Isaiah 28:16, NIV)

Luke 2:21-35 tells us the story of Simeon. He was an old man, righteous and good, who greatly longed for the coming of the Messiah. God had promised him that before he died, he would see this Messiah with his own eyes.

On this particular day, the Spirit of God had led him into the Temple. When Mary and Joseph brought in the infant Jesus to be circumcised, Simeon knew this Child was the One. He took the Baby Jesus in his arms, praised God for His coming, and blessed Mary and Joseph. He went on to tell them:

"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35, NIV).

Simeon was affirming what the Old Testament prophets had said about the Christ. To some, He would be a stumbling block. To others, He would be a cornerstone. The Messiah would be controversial. He himself would serve as a dividing line. Those who rejected Him would fall. Those who accepted Him would find life and deliverance in Him. There would be no middle ground.

We see that sharp division throughout Jesus' earthly ministry. His life was framed with it.

Read the story of the wise men in Matthew 2:1-12. Earthly leaders were afraid of His authority and tried to destroy Him. His own people expected a different kind of Messiah. They met Him with apathy, fear, or opposition. But those from far away, those who seemed the least likely to have any interest in Him, somehow recognized that He was a great King, worthy of worship.

Look at His crucifixion, and you'll see the same picture. Jealous leaders tried to destroy Him. His own people were apathetic or antagonistic. But a rough Roman soldier, sent there to crucify Him, recognized Him as the Son of God.

Why the sharp division? Jesus said of himself what the Scriptures said about Him: He is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 26:63-64). He is the Maker and Ruler of all (Colossians 1:15-19). He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16). At His name every knee will one day bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11).

Such claims leave no middle ground. No one can stay neutral. When we encounter Jesus, we will react to Him. We will decide for ourselves who He is. Those who don't recognize and accept Him as Lord have rejected Him. To them, He becomes a stumbling block, One who causes them to fall.

To those who accept Him as Lord of their lives, He is the Cornerstone. He brings shape, stability, and unity to all of life.

Like the wise men, like so many millions down through the ages, rich and poor, young and old, great and humble, recognize Him as Your Creator, as Lord of your life. Come to Him. Discover Him. Worship Him: Jesus Christ.

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