

Christ the Cornerstone

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Preacher: Nigel Anderson

[0 : 00] This afternoon, first of all, in Zechariah, prophecy of Zechariah, chapter 10, and we'll read the first five verses and then the parable of the tenants in Mark chapter 12.

But that's we, well, the last time, I'll be away next Sunday, it's two Sundays, but last time we'll be looking at an aspect of the prophecy of Zechariah.

So let's read the first five verses here. Ask rain from the Lord in the season of the spring rain, from the Lord who makes the storm clouds, and he will give them showers of rain, to everyone the vegetation and the field, for the household gods utter nonsense, and the diviners, diviners, see lies. They tell false dreams and give empty consolation. Therefore the people wander like sheep. They are afflicted for lack of a shepherd. My anger is hot against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders.

For the Lord of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah, and I will make them like his majestic steed in battle. From him shall come the cornerstone.

[1 : 18] From him, the tent peg. From him, the battle bow. From him, every ruler, all of them together. They shall be like mighty men in battle, trampling the foe in the mud of the streets.

They shall fight because the Lord is with them, and they shall put to shame the riders on horses. Then in Mark's Gospel, Mark chapter 12, we've been reading one of the designations of Jesus as the cornerstone, and let's see how that's expressed in Mark 12.

The first 11 verses. And Jesus, he began to speak to them in parables. A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower and leased it to tenants and went into another country.

When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again, he sent to them another servant.

And they struck him in the head and treated him shamefully. And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others, some they beat and some they killed. He had still one other, a beloved son.

[2 : 41] Finally, he sent him to them, saying, They will respect my son. But those tenants said to one another, This is the heir. Come, let us kill him.

And the inheritance will be ours. And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do?

He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. Have you not read the scripture? The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. May God bless these readings from his holy and inspired word.

As we turn back to Zechariah chapter 10, let's read again verses 3 and 4, very much the pivotal verses of this passage, where God declares, My anger is hot against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders.

[3 : 45] For the Lord of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah, and I will make them like his majestic steed in battle. From him shall come the cornerstone. From him, the tent peg.

From him, the battle bow. From him, every ruler, all of them together. With the particular focus on Christ, the cornerstone.

There are five short subsections from this passage, certainly from these two verses. You can see them there, as we'll see, God willing, how in this prophecy of Zechariah, God, through Zechariah, gives this prophecy, this, if you like, foretelling and foretelling of the Lord Jesus to come.

We know, of course, that the Lord is my shepherd, the Lord who comes as our shepherd and acts as our shepherd, our leader, our guide. And that's certainly featured in this passage.

But then the four other designations of the Lord Jesus that perhaps we're, well, maybe not quite so familiar with. The cornerstone, the tent peg, the battle bow, the ruler.

[4 : 58] And each of these we're going to look at in a relatively short time just to bring out the wonder, the majesty, the glory, the power, the love of the Lord Jesus, even as these particular designations give us.

But particularly Christ, the cornerstone. I'm going to ask you a question. What do the following places have in common?

Nottingham, Swansea, Bournemouth, Colchester, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Stirling. Well, apart from being towns and cities in Great Britain, they've all got a church in these cities called Cornerstone. And that's not just a name that was plucked out of a hat, as it were. It's a name that's been chosen very carefully. It's a name that's been chosen very deliberately. Because that name Cornerstone, as we've already seen, I suppose, that name points to the Lord Jesus.

And, you know, when we think of that designation Cornerstone, that was, well, was mentioned prophetically of Jesus. We're going to sing Psalm 118 at the end.

[6 : 12] And, of course, in that psalm, the psalm we so often sing, or towards the end of a communion service, we sing from that psalm. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

And, of course, Jesus himself, he referred to himself as the cornerstone. That's what we read in Mark chapter 12, when that parable he taught of those who had been sent by God to proclaim the gospel truth to the people.

And then, finally, the beloved son, the beloved son of God, who was rejected and killed. And that, of course, Jesus speaking of himself as the cornerstone, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

Or you can go to Isaiah 28, verse 15, for example. Therefore thus says the Lord, Behold, I am the one who has laid us a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone of a sure foundation.

And it's that same aspect of the Lord Jesus as our cornerstone. That's what Zechariah is referring to here. He's speaking prophetically of the Lord Jesus to come.

[7 : 34] And that name, cornerstone, is so full of meaning because the more that we look at this meaning or look at the word cornerstone and what it means of Jesus, then I pray that we'll see more clearly what it's telling us of our Savior.

So that the more we know him, the more that you trust him. Well, we will come to that designation in more detail in a moment. That's, as it were, by way of introduction, just to whet your appetite, as it were, when we think of Christ, the cornerstone.

But before we look more closely at that designation, then we have to see, as I said, in this passage, these prophetic utterances that, in fact, tell of Jesus much more than simply the cornerstone.

As you've seen in the list of the little subheadings that we're going to look at, they tell of Jesus as the shepherd, the tent peg, the battle bow, and the ruler.

And when we look at these designations, we're going to, God willing, see the bigger picture that these words tell us of Jesus. It's a very short passage, just a couple of verses.

[8 : 45] But as we'll see, they tell us of our Lord and Savior, our great pioneer, our leader, our guide, and the one who gives His people absolute security for all eternity.

We'll see that these designations tell of our Lord and Savior as the one who fights in behalf of His people, Christ the battle bow. The one who rules eternally in the hearts of His people, Christ the ruler.

and so in these verses, these two verses, these few words, and yet they give such a grand overview of the Lord Jesus. And we're here to know Him.

We're here to worship our Lord and Savior. And so the more as we look at these verses, let's praise Him. Let's the more lean on Him and follow Him with a greater understanding of who He is because these verses, this passage, points us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

They tell of His work of salvation for sinners. So I said just a few lines of Scripture and yet so full of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus so that you're enabled the more to focus your hearts and minds and souls on the Lord Jesus Christ.

[10:06] So let's contemplate, let's reflect on these great words. You who've been through these selected passages in Zechariah, who've been looking at in our evening services, of course, these verses are part of the full of prophecy that Zechariah was given at a time when the people who had been exiled in Babylon, when they'd returned, they'd returned from captivity.

And they were back in the land of Judah and back in the capital, Jerusalem. And in many ways, I suppose, you could say, and some, I do say from Scripture that the restoration process, them getting settled back into Judah and Jerusalem, that had already happened. But there was certainly no room for complacency, especially from the leaders of the people. Because the leaders of the people, well, we read of them, verse 3, my anger is hot against the shepherds.

The shepherds, the leaders who were given the task of leading God's people, particularly leading them in the truth of who God is and what God requires of them. So, these leaders who had been with the people before the exile, these leaders, in fact, had led the people astray because the leaders had failed to remain true to God's word.

And there was a danger, of course, a real danger that with the people having returned from Judah, from Babylon to Judah, that the same thing could happen again, the same dereliction of duty from the leaders, from weak leaders.

[11:40] So, God's using Zechariah here to warn, warn the people against, you might say, damaging leaders. Because damaging leaders leads to damaged souls.

It leads to false hope given by false prophets giving false comfort. And, well, Zechariah had actually spoken of them before in chapter 2.

He'd spoken of these men who'd spoken deceit and given just, as we said, false comfort. And as a result, the people had wandered far from God because they had no shepherd to guide and to lead them in the truth of God's word.

But there's one shepherd, one shepherd who does guide his people, who guides his people in all truth. And that's, as we see here, that's Christ the shepherd.

Christ the shepherd in contrast to these false shepherds, these weak shepherds, these foolish shepherds of God's people. Because the Lord Jesus Christ as our shepherd certainly doesn't lead his people astray as we read there in verse 3.

[12:53] I mean, just look again at that verse because God was saying it there in these words that he was angry with these leaders in Jerusalem because God's flock, God's people have to be cared for.

They have to be given direction, the way of truth, the way of righteousness. But these shepherds, these false teachers, these false shepherds if you like, they'd given false teaching.

God says he'll punish them. But that isn't the end of the matter. God will care for his people. God's going to care for his flock.

God's going to provide a true leader, a true shepherd, a true and utterly reliable leader. And notice, a leader who's going to come from the tribe of Judah.

And we know from the book of Genesis, many centuries before Zechariah's time, isn't it Genesis 49? We know from that chapter that Jacob had prophesied that one would come, one would come from the tribe of Judah.

[14:01] One would come who would lead his people. In fact, one would come who would reign forever. And of course, it was from that tribe that King David came. And of course, it was from the line, the family of David, that the Lord Jesus and his human nature came.

So the prophecy of one to come that says from the house of Judah fulfilled in the Lord Jesus.

Because as is prophesied here in Zechariah, Zechariah 10, the leader would come, the one true shepherd would come.

And this is great, great language, great figurative language. But someone, the Lord Jesus would come, that's the shepherd, that's the one who would guide and lead and the one we'd notice who'd transform his people, change them.

As we're told here, into a majestic steed in battle, a majestic war horse in battle. In other words, even as we were thinking this morning of the change that the Lord Jesus gives to his people, that transforming grace, that grace that the Lord gives to his people, that grace that changes, that changes you, that gives you, that changes you from darkness to light, that changes you from weakness to strength.

As the prophecy gives here, like the strength of the war horse in battle, full of power, full of might, and ready to go into battle against the Lord's enemies.

[15 : 32] And isn't it that aspect of power and strength and might that the Lord gives to his people? It gives to you, as Zechariah really explains here in this, the prophecy of the great leaders to come.

And we know, of course, from the immediate times or not long after Zechariah's prophecy, certainly there were great leaders who came from the tribe of Judah, leaders who came to guide the Lord's people.

For example, there was the Jewish priest Judah at Maccabee in the time between the Old Testament and the New Testament. But even these leaders, even that leader in particular, was but a forerunner of the great leader, the great shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it's in this prophecy then that we see the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ as our shepherd, as our leader. And I suppose the language of Christ, the cornerstone, the tent peg, the battle bow, the ruler might seem rather alien to our 21st century minds, but not at all.

It's certainly language we can still grasp and understand that tells us who Jesus is to enable you the more, as we say, to worship him, to glorify him, and to follow him.

[16 : 54] Well, what do we read here of Christ, the cornerstone? Well, of course, we have to understand what a cornerstone was. It was that large stone that gave stability to the building, the stone that assured the building's integrity.

It could be the foundation stone, but it certainly was a stone that really kept the whole building standing true and firm and sure. So speaking of the one to come, the Messiah, the Christ, to come as a cornerstone, Zechariah's prophesying of the one to come will bring stability, who will bring his people together, and who'll do that by himself, by his own strength, by his own power.

The Lord Jesus to come, the cornerstone, who gives his people that faith and that strength to resist all that would challenge the Lord and his church. And as we're told here, the one to come will come from, well, the wording, the specific word is from him, but really the manner of the language here really tells us it's from Judah.

From Judah will come the one who's the cornerstone. This is the one whom Zechariah prophesies of. It's the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who brings his people together, who unites his people, and does so by his grace, by his love, brings his people in that unity that is the church.

The one who keeps his church safe, the one who keeps his church united, stable, and stable as a result of his great love, his great grace.

[18 : 46] And, you know, the more that you dwell on the imagery of Christ as the cornerstone, the more actually you can even apply that to yourself. Yes, we can apply that to the church at large, but you can actually even apply the truth of Christ the cornerstone to your own life as a Christian because he gives you that stability in him.

He gives you that eternal safety, and you know that your being in Christ is sure because he's the foundation of your faith.

He's the rock in which you build your lives. It's what Jesus spoke of when he gave the parable of the two house builders, the one who built this house in the rock, who didn't lose his house when the storm came because the house was built in the rock.

But the other man who built his house in sand didn't build in that sure foundation, didn't build on the rock that's Christ, and so his house fell, his life collapsed.

And so the more you see Christ as our cornerstone, it helps you to know that your security is in him, and your security is stable, sure, and eternal.

[19 : 58] We mentioned Psalm 118 a moment ago. As we said, it's so often sung at communion time, maybe we should sing it more. That stone is made head cornerstone, which builders did despise.

This is the doing of the Lord and marvellous in our eyes. Yes, Jesus may well be despised and rejected by so many. And he may well be the rock of offence in which men and women stumble when they come across the Lord Jesus and reject him.

But it's the same Lord Jesus who's the sure and steadfast cornerstone. And he keeps you strong in him. And he ensures that you can never be lost, that you can never wholly crumble in your faith. Because it's Jesus, and Jesus alone keeps you safe eternally. He is the foundation of your faith. It's that sure foundation that keeps you safe for all eternity.

So even now, even in the quiet of your heart, give thanks that the eternal safety of your soul is guaranteed because the Lord Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, the chief cornerstone, the one who gives that sure stability, that integrity, that stability, even that uniting of his people in him is the cornerstone.

[21 : 26] But then secondly, we're told that he's the tent peg. From him or from Judah will come the tent peg. I suppose if you heard that spoken of somebody, oh, you're the tent peg, I'm not sure how that would go down well.

It doesn't really sound very flattering, if it's not meant to be. But, of course, context is crucial. Context is absolutely crucial, because in the context of the time when these words were first uttered, the tent peg was absolutely crucial, the nail pin, absolutely crucial, because these tent pegs secured the tents for the nomadic people that crossed the desert.

And these were very large pegs, even nails, were driven deep into the sand to secure the tents for these people that were nomads crossing the desert.

Because these tent pegs, or these tent pins, they kept the tent secure, and kept the people safe inside secure. Particularly when there were these tempestuous winds and storms, and the people kept safe because of these relatively small tent pegs.

On the one hand, it might have seemed just a minor piece of equipment. And yet it was utterly, utterly necessary for the protection of those in their dwelling places.

[22 : 56] And so when we think of Jesus as a tent peg, well, I suppose in some ways, in many ways, very similar to Jesus being the cornerstone, one who gives security, the one who gives safety.

But then being called the tent peg, telling of Jesus, that gives that absolute reliable stability, in times of trouble.

Because he's the one who protects you from danger, from the tempestuous onslaughts of the evil one. He gives you that protection, and he's done so by his death.

His death that was sufficient to appease God's wrath. Because he is your protector, and you can trust in him fully and absolutely to keep you safe, to keep you strong, to keep you from the challenges of the evil one.

So that when Jesus says, for all for whom he died, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand, you can trust him absolutely that he fulfills what he promises.

[24 : 07] Because you will never be plucked from his hand, you're safe in Christ the tent peg. So you can rely on him absolutely. Don't ever even doubt your eternal security in Christ.

Don't ever doubt his word that he promises to keep you safe, and that no one or no thing will pluck you from the hand of the Lord Jesus. Because his grace is sufficient for you.

Don't ever doubt that his work on the cross was insufficient to save you. So we've seen so far of this emphasis on stability. Stability for your souls.

Christ the cornerstone, Christ the tent peg. But there's something else here that we see. Christ the battle bow.

Again, this brings out this sort of military connotation here. Because at the time when Zechariah gave this prophecy, if a leader was likened to a battle bow, well, it spoke of him being a military leader.

[25 : 10] someone who led his army and led his army from the front in battle. And in the immediate context of these words, the leaders from the tribe of Judah, they would lead the tribe even in conflict, in battle.

But of course, the fuller prophecy, the fuller fulfilling of the prophecy, had been found in the Lord Jesus, the lion of the tribe of Judah. The Lord Jesus is our mighty warrior, the one who fought against Satan and defeated him on the cross.

And again, going back to the crucifixion of Jesus by his death, he's protected you from that power, that power of Satan. Even on the cross itself, Jesus was our battle bow, was our military leader, was the one who conquered, conquered Satan, conquered sin, and three days later, conquered death itself.

And as a mighty warrior, he attacks and has attacked, and he defends. He defends you, protects you, protects you from, yes, from the evil one.

But we might also say this, that he protects you from that horror of the eternity of separation from God, because he protects you and has protected you from the wrath of God against sin.

[26 : 35] So he's your protector, he's your deliverer, because he's our battle bow, our warrior, our warrior prince. And that aspect of the Lord Jesus as our battle bow, the one who leads, the one who fights for his people, the one who conquers, well, we see it, and we'll see it ultimately, when the Lord Jesus returns.

We see that in the prophecy given in Revelation 6, verse true. And I looked, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow, bow, battle bow, had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer.

And when you know that you have Christ the battle bow, Christ the mighty warrior with you, beside you, for you, surely that gives you that absolute confidence, that you know that you share in that victory, the victory that Christ has won over sin, over Satan, and over death itself.

And what a privilege to know that you who are his, you're in the Lord's army, that he's fought for you, he fights for you, and the victory is yours, the victory that's assured, it's assured because of the Lord Jesus, our battle bow.

Because he holds that battle bow in his hand. And no devil, no anti-Christian government, no secular ruler, no keyboard warrior is ever going to overpower the mighty warrior, the mighty prince, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[28 : 17] Because he's won the victory over sin, Satan, death for itself. And he's going to return with that battle bow in his hand. And he's going to reveal his power. He's going to show it, even in his power over all who rejected him.

But you, who know the Lord as your saviour, as your shepherd, your cornerstone, as the tent peg, you know that you are safe on all eternity.

And when Christ returns, you have that confidence to know that when he does return, you are assured absolutely of eternal life and the eternal kingdom.

all because of our Lord Jesus Christ, who's won that victory. Because us, the cornerstones, the shepherd, the tent peg, the battle bow, he's our ruler.

He's our ruler. You know, you go through scripture, of course, and you see on a number of occasions that speaking of the Lord's people is reigning with Christ, reigning in the present and reigning with him in glory.

[29 : 24] Peter himself wrote of Christians as being part of a royal priesthood. When you think of Christ, a ruler, he's king, he's the ultimate ruler of his people.

And you who are his, you're part of his family, that royal family. And you have that status of being in that family, being as it were, with Christ, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings.

And, you know, part even of that family now, you have a royal identity. You'll never lose that identity. Because, again, going back to Revelation, Revelation 22, verse 5, that we're told that all who are Christ will reign with him eternally.

We'll judge the world and judge, and with Christ, judge the world and judge the angels. You'll reign with him forever. You're united with him now.

You're in Christ now. You're united in him forevermore. You're together with Christ now. You'll be together with him, even in the eternity of the new heaven and new earth.

[30 : 37] And, you know, in just these few verses, we've seen this promise, the promise that was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, the promise of the mighty warrior, the Prince of Peace.

We've seen in these few verses the Lord Jesus, the one who lived for you, the one who died for you, and the one who's united you to him by his death. And I pray then that these few words of Zechariah chapter 10, certainly verses 3, particularly verse 4, that they've given you that comfort, that reassurance to know that you who are his, that you follow the one who has that power, that might, that greatness.

And that you, you're his, the one who gained that victory at Calvary. What if you don't know the Lord Jesus?

What if you don't know him as the cornerstone? What if you don't have that absolute security and true foundation in your life? Well, if you're not going to trust in him as your reliable protector, the mighty warrior, ruler of all, who will you trust?

What if you surrender your life to him now? And give glory to him and giving of yourself to the one who gave himself for you? Because if not, where is your eternal security?

[32 : 06] Where's your eternal protection from the wrath of God? Who's going to fight you when the evil one attacks? Who are you going to give your allegiance to if not the Lord Jesus Christ?

Well, come to him and be grafted into union with him. And do it for the sake of your soul, your precious soul. And all who have given their life to the Lord Jesus, the shepherd, the cornerstone, the tent peg, the battle bow, the ruler, none have regretted that.

You will never regret that when you give your life to the Lord Jesus. But the invitation's given, given to come to him, come to him. And you will have no regrets for all eternity.

You'll give praise and thanks to the one who came as that great shepherd, as that great cornerstone, the one who came in love.

Amen. Let us pray. Our God, our King, we thank you for your word. And we pray, Lord, that as we have heard you speak to us from your word of your Son, we pray, Lord, that we will truly see him as he is.

[33 : 24] And all his power, his might, his glory, that we will see him and rejoice in him and praise him and follow him and know our dependence on our Saviour, who gave his life for us for all eternity.

Hear us, Lord, as we continue in worship before you now. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.