

# The Cornerstone

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[ 0 : 00 ] The Word of God in the passage that we read together in the book of Psalms, Psalm 118. Tonight we're going to look at verses 22 to 24.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it. We're looking at this passage in anticipation, God willing, of communion, which we've been longing for for the past two years or so.

And we know that this passage is a passage that is prophetic and prophetic about Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of his church, of his people.

This is something that's picked up in the New Testament a number of places. Matthew 21, for example, verse 42, Jesus refers to himself when he specifies this passage as the cornerstone that the builders rejected.

[ 1 : 07 ] And that was in relation to his being rejected by those to whom he came, his own people, the people of Israel. Then 1 Peter chapter 2 and also in Ephesians, you have a reference, for example, Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 19 to 22.

You can see there that you are no longer strangers and aliens. You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

In whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

In other words, Christ himself is, in the New Testament, explanation of these words. He is the cornerstone of the spiritual building. And his people are that building as God builds them into connection with this cornerstone.

Now in this psalm we find a number of voices. As you go through it, there are a number of different voices speaking out throughout the psalm. You have voices that speak about this person who is here called the stone that the builders rejected, who himself speaks.

[ 2 : 28 ] In verse 19, for example, open to me the gates of righteousness. And you find a picture there as you come to verse 26 of a welcome given to this person as he comes into the temple of God.

In other words, you have a wonderful picture throughout the psalm of a throng of people waiting for this procession to arrive. A procession of which this king, this important person, is the head.

And as he comes to the gates, he cries out, open to me the gates of righteousness that I may enter into them. And as he enters into the through the gates of righteousness, as he enters the spiritual temple, as it were, the waiting crowd welcome him blessed as he who comes in the name of the Lord.

We bless you from the house of the Lord and so on. And it goes on to speak about the sacrifice that is bound to the altar for the benefit of his people.

But we're looking tonight at verses 22 to 24. And in that we have three leading thoughts that we can just very briefly mention and open out partially.

[ 3 : 42 ] There is, first of all, in the first part of verse 22, an examination leading to rejection. The stone that the builders rejected.

And the second part of verse 22 has rejection turning to exaltation. It's become the cornerstone. This is the doing of the Lord.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Examined and rejected. But then the rejection turns to exaltation.

And thirdly, we have in the remaining verses 23 and 4, a confession involving rejoicing. This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. So as we're doing this in anticipation, I know there's still some 10, 11 days or so to go to the communion.

[ 4 : 39 ] But we want to focus our minds firmly on Jesus. We heard that in the two prayers tonight. How Jesus has to be very much the center of our focus at all times.

But of course, the communion especially brings us to focus upon him in his death. That is really essentially what you find in these verses. And there's nothing more profitable for us.

In the midst of all that discourages us. In the midst of all the darkness around us, as we heard in prayer. The things that you actually have your heart at times just discouraged by.

And come to just almost despair of how things are. When you focus on Jesus, on the kingship of Jesus. And the way that that kingship of Jesus relates to us as believing people.

That's when your heart is uplifted. That's when you look out beyond yourself. When you look out beyond the things that are around you. The things that would discourage. That would cast you down. That drive you to despair if you let them.

[ 5 : 40 ] You focus on this particular glorious person. And all that he has done. And all that he's now doing for his people. So the examination firstly leading to rejection.

There is the stone that the builders rejected. Now the picture there is of a stone mason or stone masons. Particularly in those days you still find it of course. When you go out to the castle and see the wonderful stone work.

That's been done more recently. You admire the wall. The way it's been built together marvelously by stone masons. Well some of that stone would be dressed specifically to go into the wall.

And fit perfectly in with the other stones around it. But this is talking about a corner stone. And the stone mason would actually in those days. Make sure that the corner stone was actually built.

And was placed in such a way that would relate to. The rest of the building. We'll see that in a moment. But the examination of the stone was important. And Jesus used these words from the psalm.

[ 6 : 40 ] To apply to the way that he was being examined. By the leadership in Israel at the time. Who were actually examining him. Especially as the cross became. Was nearer to him.

And as he became. As he went to nearer to the cross in time. The opposition. The examination. Became more minute. And more critical as well.

As it went on. And as Jesus was examined. Like that. He was tried by these human agencies. Coming to the sham trial of course.

And even Herod of course involved in it as well. And here is what God approves of. Jesus himself. The savior that he sent into the world.

And he is being examined by human authorities. And he doesn't just fit with their expectations. He doesn't fit with what they themselves think is required. To be a foundational stone in the building of God.

[ 7 : 38 ] To be the Messiah. To be the savior. So they reject him. They cast him out. They crucify him. That is the ultimate. In their rejection.

And it fits in with John's emphasis. Doesn't it? In the opening verses of John. Or the chapter of John. He came to his own. And his own did not receive him.

He came to the people. From whom he was born physically. The Jewish people. People of Israel. People of the covenant. And yet this is their verdict.

They examined this as a possible cornerstone. They examined his claims. They examined what others said about him. They examined the scriptures indeed. But they just could not fit him into these descriptions.

He did not fit with their own verdict. Their own view of what the Messiah should be like. And so they came to reject him. And that intensified as the Lord went on in his life.

[ 8 : 39 ] And it reached the ultimate in the cross itself. And yet marvelously and mysteriously. That rejection is part of God's plan.

This was not something separate from what God intended. This was not separate from God's provision of a Savior. It was very much within the terms of that provision.

It was very much in line with God's will as to who the Messiah should be. As to what the Savior should be like. What the Savior should do. And how he would come to give his life on the cross.

It didn't interfere in any way with Christ's own willingness. With the Lord sending off him. But it is part of the process by which the cross comes about.

By which the death of Jesus comes to be fulfilled and accomplished on the cross. An examination leading to rejection.

[ 9 : 43 ] But a rejection that belongs to the plan. The saving plan of God. And tonight you marvel at that.

Tonight you actually say as you anticipate once again remembering the Lord's death and the Lord's supper. You marvel at the method. You marvel at the way in which it all came about.

Even in terms of this working out in the process of time and in this world itself. For these years and for this stretch of Christ's life on earth. How there is God working out his plan.

And yet it involves human rejection of the one that God has chosen. Secondly there's a rejection that turns to exaltation.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Far from actually being discarded by God.

[ 10 : 41 ] God had actually placed him and set him and chosen him to be the cornerstone of his spiritual building the church. His own temple made up of his people.

Now what is a cornerstone? And what did a cornerstone in those days especially. What did it function as? Well many people think that it was actually the stone on which the foundation was built. And it certainly was part of the foundation. But the foundation was not strictly speaking built on top of the stone itself. And the stone was certainly a lot more than what you would find perhaps afterwards in buildings nearer own age.

Of a stone that became a stone with an inscription on it. A commemoration stone of what the building was about. The cornerstone actually set the direction of the walls in the building.

So that the cornerstone had to be exactly right. If that corner was going to be at right angles. It had to be a right angled stone. And then the walls could be taken in the right direction from that stone to set the direction of the whole building.

[ 11 : 52 ] And in terms of its leveling. As it was leveled on the top. Then all that came around to fit in alongside it could be leveled off from that stone as well. That's the cornerstone.

It sets the direction for that whole building. The whole building in a sense is dependent on that stone being right. And if that stone wasn't right.

Then there was going to be something wrong with the whole building that was built in relation to it. Either its walls were not going to be in a proper angle from it. Or the level of it was somehow going to be out eventually.

Here is what God is saying about this stone that was rejected by the builders. The fact is that it is God's chosen stone to be the one that sets the direction of his church for all eternity.

Everything that's built in relation to this stone. Every stone that comes to be placed into the walls of God's spiritual temple. That's his own people. His own saved people.

[ 12 : 53 ] Every single one of them. As they come to be laid into as living stones as Peter puts it. The walls of this temple. They are set in relation to this cornerstone that Jesus is.

The direction of your own life is actually set in terms of this stone. The angles of the stone. The quality of the stone. The direction that this stone sets for your life.

That's why it's so important that we are savingly related to Christ. That's why there was such special care taken in choosing it.

I mentioned Peter's reference to the stone in 1 Peter 2 and verse 6. Where you find it stands in scripture.

This is what he's saying. You have come to him, verse 4, as a living stone. Rejected by men, but in the sight of God, chosen and precious.

[ 13 : 56 ] You yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house. And you see what it's saying. Here is the living stone, the cornerstone. Here is Jesus himself that sets the direction and the nature of the whole building.

But he says, as you come to him. As you come into connection and relation to him. Rejected by men, but in the sight of God, chosen and precious.

You are being built up as spiritual house. For it stands in scripture. Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious.

For whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. So for the apostles, you see these great prophecies and expressions of the Old Testament were so fitting in describing Jesus.

That they could actually present this in their preaching as a fulfillment of this scripture. Along with many other scriptures. But this one in particular, in relation to the cornerstone.

[15:03] It is God's cornerstone. The builders rejected it. They examined it. And they rejected it. It wasn't fit to become the cornerstone. But it's the stone that God himself chose.

Before Jesus ever came to be born. Before the Son of God became human. In the way he came into this world. Before this stone, he was chosen from all eternity to be the cornerstone for his people.

When you come to remember him, God willing, in his death in a couple of weeks time or less than two weeks time. You come to remember him as specially chosen by God for you and for me.

We didn't just choose him. In fact, our choosing of him was itself by an act of God's grace renewing our hearts and enabling us to embrace him as he's offered in the gospel to us.

But before all of that took place, he had already been chosen by God, by God the Father. To be this critically important cornerstone spiritually of his church.

[16:12] Rejected. Rejected. Turning to exaltation. But how did the rejection come to turn to exaltation?

How did it come to become the cornerstone? Where is that particularly laid down? When did God lay this cornerstone in actuality? Chosen in eternity.

But when did it come actually to be laid, if you like, as the cornerstone of the building? Well, you have to go to both the cross and the resurrection of Christ for that.

Remember, perhaps, maybe remember in Acts chapter 4 and verse 10, where you find there the two things brought together, the death and resurrection of Jesus within one verse.

Acts 4 and verse 10. Here is the demonstration here by Peter and John before the council as they're preaching there and presenting Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament and going over the things that happened.

[17:14] And Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed?

Let it be known to you, to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the head of the corner. And there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

You see how that proceeds from what happened to this crippled man and his healing under the direction of Peter and the apostles there as they came to that point.

And as this was then questioned by those who had seen it, here is Peter's response. Such an event in the course of one man's experience.

[18:33] And the question, how did this come about? Well, it came about through this very thing, that the stone which was rejected by the builder, this man, this Jesus, this person, who by his rejection and then resurrection became the cornerstone, and in contact with him, this man was made well.

That's the demonstration of Peter about who this is. That's when it turned to exaltation for Jesus. His rejection by the people, having been chosen by God, his being put to death.

And Peter there saying, you crucified him. It's your doing. You are responsible for the rejection that terminated in the crucifixion. You did not want this man to be your king.

But God ultimately is carrying out his plan. And he has become the head of the corner in God's way of dealing with it.

And so that's where you find in the Psalms, Psalm 118 here. As we mentioned before, here is this individual saying that, Open to me the gates of righteousness.

[19:55] Or before that, I shall not die, but I shall live and recount the deeds of the Lord. The Lord has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death. Jesus died, but death did not claim him.

Death was not victorious over him. He gave himself to death. He conquered death. He overcame death. Even on the cross, there's victory over death and over sin.

But it's followed by, followed by the resurrection that demonstrated, as Martin said in his prayer, demonstrated and proved God's acceptance of that death as being fully sufficient for himself, for all that he required, and for us, for all that we needed.

He's become the head of the corner. It's turned to his exaltation. And as it does so, he claims entrance to the temple of God, to the heavens themselves.

Open to me the gates of righteousness. Something like Psalm 24, or similar to Psalm 24, where you find that claim coming near the end of the psalm.

[ 21 : 06 ] Who is this king? Who is this king who comes to demand entrance? Who is this king who's at the head of the procession? Who is this victor? This great individual?

Who is he? Who is this king of glory? Lift up your heads, your gates. Open up for this person. But who is he? Why should the gates open up for him?

It is the king of glory. The Lord strong and mighty. The Lord mighty in battle. Lift up, you ancient doors, that the king of glory may enter in.

This is who he is. The one to whom the gates of your heart opened. To receive him into your life too. As your chief cornerstone.

As your king. That's why you come to praise him tonight. That's why you come to anticipate with a sense of joy, once again, remembering him in the Lord's Supper that he instituted for us.

[ 22 : 14 ] An examination leading to rejection. But all part of God's plan. Rejection turning to exaltation through the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God.

And it finishes with confession involving rejoicing. This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes.

It's the Lord's doing. None else could have done it. No one else could have achieved it. It's not achieved by our human effort. It's not by our dearest wish being fulfilled.

It's the Lord's doing. He has brought it about. You know, we believe in miracles. Why do we believe in miracles?

Why do some people reject the idea of the miraculous altogether? Why do we believe in miracles? Why do we believe in the miracles we read when we read the Bible? And read the miracles that are mentioned in the Bible.

[ 23 : 16 ] In the Old Testament and in the New. Not just in the ministry of Jesus. Why do we believe in these miracles? Because we really believe in the resurrection of Christ.

That's why. If you believe in the resurrection of Jesus. That he really indeed did rise from the dead. Then no miracle is a difficulty for you.

Even if there's much in them that you can't understand fully. Or understand the method by which they're brought about. But if I tonight and if you tonight believe in our heart of hearts.

That Jesus rose from the dead. And ascended to glory. Then every single miracle you read about in the Bible. You can fit in under that and say. Well, I believe the most difficult thing to believe.

So therefore I believe the lesser. You don't believe. You don't start looking at miracles. With a scientific or a philosophic approach.

[ 24 : 17 ] First of all. That's what people try to do. And that's why many people reject the idea of the miraculous. It doesn't fit into a scientific analysis. And way of doing or looking at things.

And it doesn't really fit with any particular kind of philosophy. That would contain this remarkable thing. But it fits into God's plan of salvation.

And it fits into your life. Because you've come to believe. To believe in Christ. To entrust your life to him. Would you entrust your life to someone who couldn't overcome death?

Would you entrust your life to someone who claimed things that he could never bring about? Would you come and entrust your life to someone who is a perfect human being but no more?

Of course you wouldn't. Of course you wouldn't. But you entrust your life. Your future. Your eternity. To this person.

[ 25 : 19 ] To the one who is the head of the corner. Who has become the cornerstone. And you entrust yourself to him. Because you know that he can look after you.

Because he's already overcome death. The most difficult thing. The greatest enemy you face. And when he's done that. There's nothing else he can't do for you.

He's become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing. And it is marvelous. In our eyes. Marvelous is something that really.

In a sense. Is an admiration of a miracle. An admiration of something remarkable. The Gospel of Luke we mentioned earlier.

Frequently has people being amazed. It's Luke's way of presenting to us. The impact of the life. And indeed the death and resurrection of Jesus.

[ 26 : 19 ] Made on people's lives. And the miracles that he performed. As they stood and watched. They were amazed. They marveled. That's the kind of word. That you find in verse 23. This is the Lord's doing.

And what is the result? It is marvelous in our eyes. We stand amazed. We stand in awe at it. We should come. Every time we come to church.

Come to a worship service. We should have that sense of awe in our hearts. And I'm sure if you're like me. You complain. That it's not there as much as you'd want it to be.

But we come with a sense of awe. We come with a sense of wonder. We come with a degree of marveling. Why? Because we're coming to worship the risen one. We're coming to worship one who has conquered death.

We're coming to worship the one who is the cornerstone. Who has himself shattered the grave. This is the doing of the Lord. It is marvelous in our eyes.

[ 27 : 24 ] And he goes on. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. That's not a reference to the Lord's day as we know.

The Sabbath day. The Lord's day. That day in the week. But it's not detached from that. It doesn't mean it has no connection at all with the Lord's day. The day that's mentioned here.

The day that the Lord has made. Is in fact what the Old Testament calls the day of salvation. The day of the Lord in that sense. The day that the prophets looked forward to.

When they very often. If you read the prophets. As you read the prophets. You'll find in that day it shall come to pass. And it's not a specific 24 hour day. It's the day of salvation.

It's the the breadth of God's salvation in Christ. As it comes to be fulfilled in Christ. And by Christ in this world. This is the day. That dawned with his entry into the world.

[ 28 : 25 ] That comes. To be. Entering into its. Final sunshine and summer at his return. The day that the Lord.

Has made. And victory. Is of course a great feature. Of this day. Begins with the cross.

And the victory. Over death. And over the grave. And over Satan. And over sin. That's why he says. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice.

And be glad in it. See that's where our rejoicing. Of course comes from. The very root of our rejoicing. Is this cornerstone. What he means.

And what he's done. He means to us. What he's done for us. So it's little wonder that he's saying. Let us rejoice. And be glad. In it.

[ 29 : 21 ] That's what this day is for. This day of salvation. That's what our experience of it is for. Or should be like. That it's a day for our rejoicing.

And when you actually find. Your hearts downcast. When things come. As they inevitably do. In the course of providence. That cause bitterness in your life. That bring.

Gloom. And that bring. Bring mourning. And sorrow. And heaviness. And longing. And yearning. And all of those things. Look around.

And see that. It's daytime. The day has not been extinguished. The day that the Lord has made. Is still in place.

And he says. Let us rejoice. Let's rejoice. And be glad in it. Source of our greatest joy.

[ 30 : 22 ] That can filter through. By God's blessing. Even to. The times of our greatest distress. And grief. And mourning. And sorrow. And trial. It does not extinguish.

Source of our rejoicing. Or the nature of that rejoicing. As you find it in Christ. Remember one lady. Years and years ago. Saying to me.

As I. Spoke to her about. The loss. Of her husband. And. Talked about. Her relationship with the Lord.

She was. Professing Christian. For many years. Lost her husband. At quite a young age. I said to her. Well. How did you look at that?

What was your experience. Of these moments. Particularly at that time. That particular time. And. The aftermath. Of your loss. And she says. I can only describe it.

[ 31 : 18 ] As bittersweet. It was bitter to me. Because I missed him. Because he was no longer there. Because my heart was sore. Because he was gone.

Because I couldn't speak to him anymore. Because he wasn't by my side. It was bitter. But it was sweet. At the same time. Because the Lord.

Was speaking to me. And saying. I'm here. I'm your husband. I'll look after you. I'll be your strength. I'll carry you through.

You see. That's how it is. And only. The Christian. Can understand that. That's why we do show. To the world. As much as we possibly can.

By God's grace. That even through our times. Of trial. There's a note. Of rejoicing. That neither death. Nor Satan.

[ 32 : 19 ] Can take out of our life. The rejoicing. That's ours. In Jesus. The cornerstone. That remains.

Unmoved. As we find life. With all its changes. This. Stone. That the builders rejected. Has become the head of the corner. This is the doing of the Lord. And marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice.

And be glad. In it. Let's pray. Lord our God. Our Heavenly Father. We thank you. That in your own great love.

You sent your son. Into this world. Having chosen him. To be the great cornerstone. Of your church. And we thank you. That he came. At exactly the right moment.

[ 33 : 19 ] When in your plan. He had been. Always appointed. To come into this world. And we give thanks Lord. For all that took place. In the experience.

And the life of our Lord. In his course on earth. We give thanks. For his overcoming. Of temptation. And for the way. In which he. Came himself.

So willingly. To give himself. Into the hands. Of those. Who did not understand. What they were doing. In his rejection. In his rejection. And yet. Despite the injustice. Of it all.

He gave himself. To that death. And even to that verdict. By which they rejected him. Lord. We thank you that. That cross. Now lies empty. And the grave.

That followed it. Lies empty. And we give thanks. That. You are at the right hand. Of the majesty. On high. And that you have set. The whole tenor.

[ 34 : 14 ] And angles. And nature. Of that church. For which you died. Bless us. We pray. As we think of those things. And especially.

As we learn of them. Through your word. Hear the prayers. Of your people. Tonight. Lord. We thank you. That this is a place. Of prayer. There's a meeting. Where prayer. Is a reality.

And we ask. That you'd hear. The prayers. Of those. Who have prayed. From their hearts. And their voices. Not heard. And the prayers. Oh Lord. Of our brothers.

Who prayed openly. Hear us Lord. We pray. As we. Continue to address you. And appeal to you. For your blessing. Receive our thanks. Cleanse us. From all our sin.

For Jesus sake. Amen.