

The Rejected Rock¹

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.

March 3, 2014

Text: Isaiah 8:11-15, Luke 20:17-18

Purpose: There is a foundation stone chosen by God, accepted by some, rejected by most. Those that fall upon it and repent find salvation and a foundation for life. Those that reject the stone, find that it will crush them and will be their undoing.

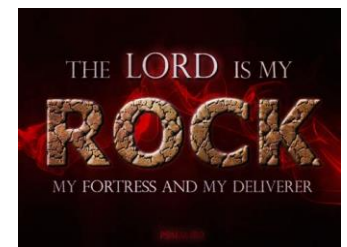
Every time a little boy went to a playmate's house, he found the friend's grandmother deeply engrossed in her Bible. Finally, his curiosity got the better of him.



"Why do you suppose your grandmother reads the Bible so much?" he asked.

"I'm not sure," said his friend, "but I think she's cramming for finals."²

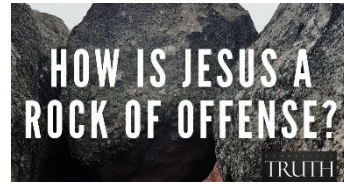
Any serious student of the word of God has come across the imagery of our Lord being compared to a Rock.



In 2 Samuel 22:2 King David describes "*The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer.*" That same is echoed again in Psalm 18:2.

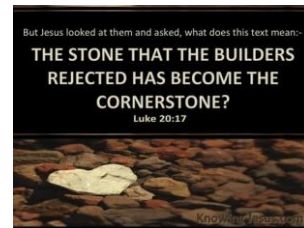
Isaiah 26:4 says the Lord is an everlasting “*rock of ages.*”

The passage of scripture we read in Isaiah chapter eight points us to the coming Messiah as one that will be “*as a Sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*” The Messiah would cause “*many among them to stumble, to fall, and be broken. To be snared and be taken.*” (Isaiah 8:14-15)



Today we are continuing with part three of a seven-part sermon series entitled, “*The Greatest Week in History.*”

We are looking at the events of the last week of Jesus’ life, the days leading up to his crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Today we will be looking at the **Rejected Rock** of Israel.



The second passage of scripture I read for you this morning was taken from Luke 20:9-19. Let me back up and give you a little context for Jesus’ statement related to “The Stone the Builders Rejected.”



“*And He began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time.*”

“*At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, so that they would give him some of the*

produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

“*And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty-handed.*

“*And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out.*

“*The owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.’*

“*But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, ‘This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours.’ “So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.*

What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others.”

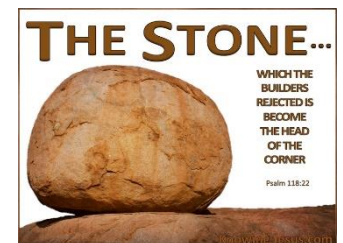
When they heard it, they said, “May it never be!”

But Jesus looked at them and said, “What then is this that is written:

‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,

THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE?’

(As quoted from Psalm 118:22)



“Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”

The hour was at hand for Jesus to be delivered up into the hands of evil men and accomplish what He had come to do.



Two weeks ago we looked at Jesus and how he had entered Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey – **a Horseless King**. Last week we looked at how Jesus entered the Temple and turned over the tables of the money changers to make His House – a **House of Prayer for All Nations**. During this final week of Jesus’ life, he entered the Temple area and would teach the people daily and confound those that opposed Him. After Jesus purged the Temple, all the religious leaders desperately sought to eliminate Jesus.

Even when Jesus is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He makes mention that He openly taught in the Temple, yet they came under the cover of darkness to arrest Him.



“Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber? “While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.” (Luke 22:52-53)

MURDEROUS INTENT

There can be no argument against the statement that the chief priests and leaders had murder in their hearts. Sprinkled throughout the gospels are statements very much like the one we see in Luke 19:47; *“And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him”*



In the verse following our text verses in 19, it says, *“And the scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them”*

We see the religious leaders trying to trap Jesus into saying something against the Roman government, they attempt to stump Him or get Him to utter what they would consider heresy by claiming divine authority to purge the temple. Yet every time they try to trap Jesus, He stumped them and caused them to leave empty handed. Luke 20:19 says, *“But after that they dared not question Him anymore.”*

Jesus continued to teach uninterrupted. The next time we see the Chief Priests is when they are paying Judas 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus. These things were not done in ignorance.



These were not zealous and well-meaning people. They were envious (Mark 15:10), they knew exactly who Jesus was by this time, and even knowing who He was all they could think of was killing Him. So vile were they in their intent that they had no qualms about turning Jesus over to

the Roman Governor (20:20), knowing that if the Romans decided to execute Him it would be done in the most inhumane fashion ever devised by the wickedness of the human heart.

Now this should not shock or surprise us. The fact that these were the leaders in Israel, the very cream of the religious elite and the rulers of the nation that was entrusted with the oracles of God does not alter the fact of the depravity of the human condition.



Some people will claim that people are basically good. That we all have good intentions and would never seek the worst for another. A serious study of Paul's *Book of Romans* helps us understand our true condition prior to receiving Jesus Christ as our Savior. Romans five reminds us that while we were yet sinners, Jesus died for us. It describes us as enemies of God prior to receiving Jesus Christ as our Savior.

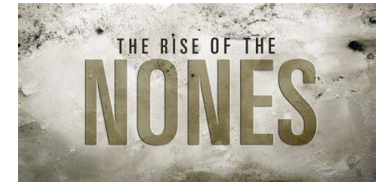
The truth of the matter is our hearts are filled with pride, arrogance, and bitterness towards God until we receive Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit. A heart set against the things of God is a heart of anger and bitterness towards anything Godly.



Through the years, the voice of the atheist has grown louder. Richard Dawkins a British biologist wrote many books including, *The God Delusion* and *A Devils Chaplain*. Madelyn Murray O'Hair was a

champion for atheism and removing God from every area of public life. Her work continues to erode our nation even today. Margaret Sanger's cause brought abortion to America through *Planned Parenthood*. Her motto in her newsletter said, "No Gods, No Masters."

Atheism is alive and doing very well today. The anti-God movement has convinced more and more that there is no God. Today the largest growing religious group of people is "None." Today in America 30% claim "None" as their religious foundation. Over the next 50 years, if current trends continue, as much as 50% of American could have NO religious affiliation.³ Could it be that those that are claiming to be Christians are actually living ungodly lives and leading many away from God?



For those of us that have accepted Christ as our Savior and Lord, we are to live Godly lives and to demonstrate the love of God that has been placed in our hearts towards all people.

GODLY AFFECTION

The Bible reminds us that God is Love. 1 John 4:8 "*The one who does not love does not know God for God is Love.*"



That is not saying that love is God, but that God is love. It is the primary characteristic of God. It is also not saying that is all God is, but we can say that God defines love. Since God is love and God cannot change, He is love eternally.

Love must have an object in order to exist. By definition, love must have a focus, a target, a recipient. God so loved us, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us – the ungodly.

Isaiah 53:4-6 foretold of how far God’s love would go for His beloved. That love was fully demonstrated on Calvary’s hill.



“Surely our grief’s He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”

This perfect substitutionary sacrifice on Calvary’s hill was God Himself – giving Himself to redeem you and me from our sinful state. That was how far God’s love would go. This was the Lamb of God slain from before the foundation of the world. This was God’s plan from the beginning.

Isaiah 53:10-11 goes on to say,

“But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His

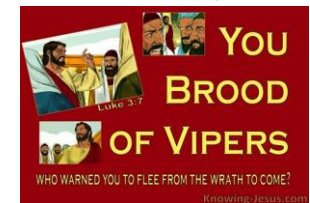
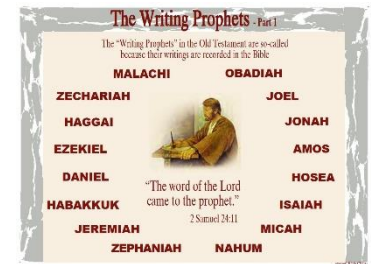
knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.”

God had sent His servants through the years – the prophets of the Old Testament – called His people Israel to repentance – yet they killed and stoned the prophets. Jesus’ parable given in Luke 20 reminded the people that they were the Vineyard of the Lord. He had sent these prophets through the centuries but they were mistreated by those in charge of the vineyard. They were mistreated and abused. Now the Master of the Vineyard sent the Son, and they were ready to destroy the Son.

Jesus confronted the opposition with this fact also. (Matthew 23:29-33)

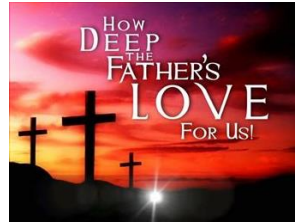
“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ “So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. “Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. “You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?”

What a bold confrontation! No wonder Jesus is called the Lion of Judah! In the parable He has just told, Jesus let us know that He was well aware of what these men were about to do. The Master had sent His beloved Son to give the



managers of the vineyard one more chance to do right, and they were going to drag that Son out of the vineyard and dash Him to death.

Stuart Townend wrote the song, “*How Deep the Father’s Love for Us.*”



How deep the Father’s love for us,
how vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son,
to make a wretch His treasure
How great the pain of searing loss,
the Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One,
bring many sons to glory

THE REJECTED STONE

Let’s read verses 15 and 16 of our text again:

So They Took Him
And Killed Him, And
Threw Him Out Of The
Vineyard.
Mark 12:8
BibleWordings.com

“So, they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them? “He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others.” When they heard it, they said, “May it never be!””

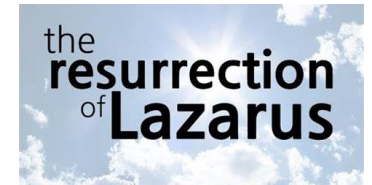
His hearers understood that the vineyard in the story represented the nation of Israel. Psalm 80:8 describes Israel as a vine come from Egypt and planted there in the Promise Land. Isaiah 5:1-7 is a poetic passage about Israel being the vineyard of the Lord.

We know from the history books, that it was 40 years after Jesus’ death that the Roman army General Titus sacked Jerusalem, destroyed the temple and took the people away in dispersion. More importantly they were going to lose their spiritual place and connection with God. Even today, almost 2000 years later, the Temple still has not been rebuilt.



So when they say, “*“May it never be!”*” they are responding with the same strong expression Paul used several times in Romans. As some may say, “Perish the very thought!” They may have said that, but their actions put them on a collision course with Jesus heading to the cross.

Israel lived in fear with the dark cloud of the Roman Empire which hovered continuously over them and could suddenly descend and take away what they had. In John chapter 11, when the news of the raising of Lazarus over in Bethany reaches the ears of the leaders in Jerusalem this account immediately follows:

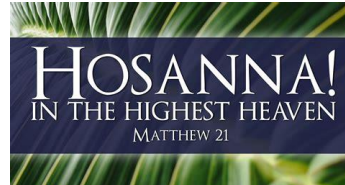


“Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the”

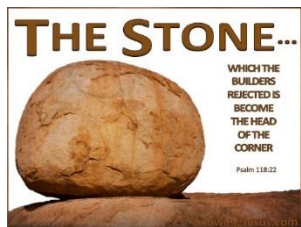
people, and that the whole nation not perish.” John 11:47-50

Jesus had just raised a man who was dead four days back to vibrant life, so in return they plotted to kill Him. They knew that this was the Son of the owner of the vineyard. They knew exactly who He was and they rejected Him and plotted to kill Him.

It is interesting here that Jesus quotes the same Psalm the people were quoting the day He rode into the city. In Psalm 118:25-26, we find: *“O Lord, do save, we beseech Thee; O Lord, we beseech Thee, do send prosperity! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord; We have blessed you from the house of the Lord”*.



When the people waved their palm branches and said, *“Hosanna”*, they were saying, *“O Lord, do save”* as it says in the Psalm. Depending on what translator you’re reading Hosanna can mean *“Save us now”* or *“Save us please”*.



The cries of the people must have still been ringing in the ears of these men before Jesus when He reminded them of earlier lines from the Psalm and challenged them to consider their meaning. Jesus quoted the verse found in Psalm 118:22, *“The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.”*

They understood the implications of what He was saying to them, as seen by their strong reaction in verse 19.

Previously they had been careful about not offending the people by trying to publicly destroy Jesus, but now they were ready to lay hands on Him immediately. This confirms to us that they knew He was telling them that because of their rejection of Him the Jewish system was going to be set aside and the kingdom of God would be offered to others. This was actually a culmination of numerous occasions where He had told them that the nations (Gentiles) would sit at the Father’s table. One example is Matthew 8:11-12. Jesus marvels at the faith shown by a Roman Centurion, and in response to that faith He declares,

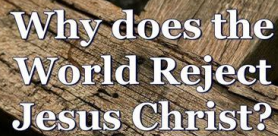


“I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

They obviously didn’t like this message any more than they appreciated His words here in our text.

They had treated Jesus as insignificant. They were the builders who were building their religious system and their nation and to them Jesus was a stone to be tossed aside as unworthy of notice.

But the Father’s assessment of Him was quite different, and the Father would make the stone the builders rejected the very cornerstone of His church, and they, the builders, were to be rejected now by Him.

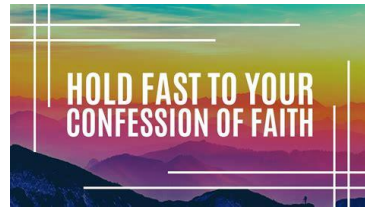


Why does the World Reject Jesus Christ?

It has always been the Father's assessment of the Son that sinful men have ignored to their great peril. This should be a warning flag to unbelievers – except – they

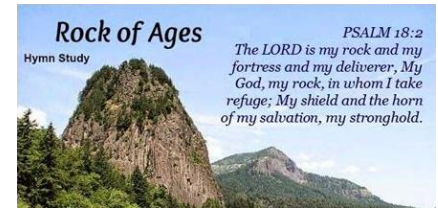
simply do not understand. We are increasingly seeing and hearing bold and blatant statements from people in the world that diminish Christ and paint Him as a totally insignificant. Today, it is politically correct to use Christians and Christ in degrading terms and words. Faithful Christians are mocked and considered backwards and uneducated.

This should serve as a wakeup call for sincere Christians to hold fast to your faith. The tide is turning and we will be tested like never before by our community and maybe even by our family. We need to turn to Christ; we need to fall on that foundation stone named Jesus, and receive Him, and confess Him before that same foundation stone falls in judgment.



First Peter chapter two reiterates this truth. The Lord has laid a chief cornerstone in Zion that is precious. If you believe on Him you will not be put to shame. But if you reject that precious stone and are disobedient, it shall become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. First Peter goes on to say you and I are to be seen as living stones built up in Christ Jesus. We are His people and should praise Him.

I don't know what promises you are standing on. As for me, I am standing on the promises of God's word and the Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ.

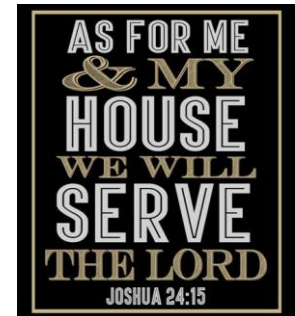


If you have never really taken a firm stand for Jesus Christ, I want to invite you to step out of your seat today and make a public profession in Jesus Christ. If we don't acknowledge Jesus as our Savior, why do you think He would ever acknowledge us before our Heavenly Father?

If we reject Him, He will reject us.

Today can be a day of declaring,
*"As for me and my house,
'We will serve the Lord.'"*

LET US PRAY



Notes:

¹ Sermon outline from sermon by Clark Tanner, The Rejected Stone

² Micky's Funnies, A Study Funny, Feb. 7, 2024

³ <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/09/13/modeling-the-future-of-religion-in-america/> (accessed 2/26/2024)