

Series: Christ in the OT

Text: Psalm 118

Message #8

THE CORNERSTONE

Introduction

1. It's Passover. Jesus is with His disciples in the Upper Room. They were talking and eating as they were reclining at the table. They were also singing. The songs that were sung were from the Jewish hymnbook, the Psalter; those songs included **Psalms 113-118**, I assume, sung from memory. These were designated as songs of thanksgiving, probably written by a Davidic king after the time of a national crisis. God had delivered His people and they were responding in grateful worship. The Passover recalled perhaps the greatest deliverance in their history – the Exodus from Egypt. Since this Psalm spoke about deliverance and was an expression of thanks, it was certainly a good fit for the occasion.
2. This song not only was sung at Passover, but it was also quoted often in the NT. In fact it is the most referenced psalm in the NT. All four Gospel writers quote from it – John once, and the other three, three times each. When Jesus first wept over Jerusalem (**Luke 13:35**) He quoted from this Psalm. As He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the multitude shouted verse 26 (**Matthew 21:42**). As He wept a second time over the city (**Matthew 23:39**) Jesus once again quoted from this text. When Peter stood before the Sanhedrin and charged the Jewish leaders with the murder of Jesus, he quoted from this psalm (**Acts 4:11**). You will find brief quotations from Psalm 118 in **Ephesians 2:20**, **Hebrews 13:6**, and **1 Peter 2:7**.
3. What is there about this OT passage that seems to carry such importance? How, if at all, does this passage speak of the Lord Jesus and how might that be significant for us? And what is a cornerstone (Bible Dictionary Definition – **A cornerstone aligned the whole building; it tied it together**)? So the point being suggested here is that Jesus is the cornerstone. What did that mean for Him and what does that mean for us? Perhaps I could summarize the message today this way.
4. **Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of God's entire plan and purpose on which we will either stand firm and grow up or stumble and fall.** Let's unpack this by considering what it meant to Jesus and to everyone else that He is the cornerstone.

5. Kids, when the Bible says that Jesus is the cornerstone, it is saying that Jesus holds everything together and He sets the size and shape of the structure. The psalm suggests that some don't like that about Jesus. How do they respond to Him (They **reject** Him)? Jesus quoted this psalm right before what happened to Him (**He was crucified**)? Those who reject Jesus are rejecting what they need and must have if they are not to perish. What is it that they need (**salvation**)? For those who receive Jesus as the cornerstone, to us it is what (a great **honor** - 1 Peter 2:7)?

I. THE CORNERSTONE TO JESUS

A. Acknowledging the goodness of God

1. Certainly Jesus knew what was coming. He had gathered the disciples together for the Passover meal, fully aware that this would be their final meal together before His crucifixion. He knew and even told the disciples that they would all scatter. He made it clear that one would sell Him out and another would deny that he even knew Him.
2. Certainly Jesus also was aware of the enormous agony that awaited Him as He bore the Father's wrath for the sins of the world. He would very shortly express that agony in prayer in the Garden (**"If it be possible, may this cup pass from me..."**).
3. But here in the shadow of abandonment and agony and aloneness and darkness and despair, He can sing a song of thanksgiving with His disciples, **"Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever...Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"** Can you imagine the comfort and blessing that came to the Lord as He rehearsed with the disciples the steadfast love of the Father that extended always toward Him, particularly establishing Him as the cornerstone? Can we acknowledge the goodness of the Lord in the dark valleys of life? Could we sing this song or would it be something else? (For Jesus, being the cornerstone meant acknowledging the goodness of God).

B. Affirming the presence and provision of God

1. A few hours before Jesus would utter those terrifying, mysterious words, **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"**, He would sing, **"They surrounded me on every side...they surrounded me like bees...but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. Glad songs of salvation are in**

the tents of the righteous.” (Glad songs of salvation are where we should dwell when we affirm His presence and provision. Where do you dwell – in the presence and provision of God or somewhere else)?

2. Jesus further testified, **“I thank you that you have answered me and become my salvation.”** In the darkest hours of the trial, God was not far away. He was present to answer. Even the agonizing, **“My God, my God why have you forsaken me”**, melted gently into **“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”** As Jesus made His way to the Garden of Gethsemane, He sang of the provision and presence of God! (We are reminded of another psalm – “Even in the valley of dark shadow, You are with me”). That’s great affirmation.

C. Affirming the purpose and promise of God (Matthew 21:33 ff.)

1. In Matthew 21, Jesus told the parable of the vineyard tenants, who, as you recall, eventually killed the owner’s son. After telling the story, Jesus quoted a portion of Psalm 118 (**Matthew 21:42-46**). It was a wake-up call for the religious leaders of the day. For they would fall on the cornerstone and be broken to pieces and crushed! But before that happened, Jesus would be killed. Even knowing what was coming, He could sing with His disciples, **“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...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... You are my God and I will give thanks to you. You are my God; I will extol you.”**
2. Jesus could knowingly and joyfully sing this because, **“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”** What great encouragement and joy the content of this Psalm must have brought to the Lord as He faced the blackest hours of His incarnation. God’s purposes, though missed or rejected by men, will be fulfilled! He will do it. The stone the builders rejected became the cornerstone! Jesus is that cornerstone! Affirming the purpose and promise of God brought great confidence and hope to the immediate crisis. True, He would be rejected by men, but He would be exalted by God the Father! That is how the cornerstone was defined and applied to Jesus.

II. THE CORNERSTONE TO THE UNCONVERTED (Acts 4:1-12) (For all who are brought face to face with Christ, there are only two possible responses. Either He is the rejected stone over

which they will stumble and ultimately be crushed in awful judgment (as He said to the religious leaders in Matthew 21) or He is the cornerstone on which they will stand and find refuge and life! Notice the message that Peter proclaimed to those looking on) (**Acts 4:1-12**).

A. It announced impending judgment. **“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by YOU, the builders.”** Suddenly the ancient psalm had taken on immediate personal application!

1. It was a pretty tough day for the religious leaders. A lame beggar who had long been seen and easily recognized outside the temple had been healed and he was walking and leaping and praising God, attracting lots of attention. Peter seized the occasion to speak of the resurrected Lord – which annoyed the Sadducees to no end. So they arrested Peter and John and held them overnight.
2. The next day, when the apostles were asked to give an answer to the council, Peter let them have it! Quoting Psalm 118 – remember, a very familiar psalm to these Jewish leaders, one that they had quoted and sung often, was thrown in their face. Peter did make one slight change in the form of application by adding, **“You!”** Then he landed the final blow! This stone rejected by you has become the cornerstone – and here is what that demands...

B. It demanded immediate repentance (a complete change of mind). **“There is salvation in no one else...”** That was not what the Jewish leaders believed!

1. In one brief statement, Judaism and all other religions and isms and religious ideas, are excluded. All religions of the world proclaim some sort of salvation – whether that is a salvation in a reincarnation (a divine do-over) or self-awareness or finding the god within us or declaring allegiance to a holy man or an ancient prophet or a holy writing or a movement or whatever! There is no salvation in any other – It is only in Christ and in Him alone that there is salvation. Apart from Christ there is no salvation for anyone at any time, only judgment.
2. If there was ever any doubt that Jesus is the exclusive way to salvation it is put to rest here. He can be rejected but that does not change the fact that He is the cornerstone. (Illustration at a coalition meeting – the world wishes to bring people together under the least common denominator – the faith community – and it matters not what the object of that faith might be). There are not many ways to

God – only one way and that way has been identified as the cornerstone – the Lord Jesus Christ! Remove Him and everything crumbles.

3. (This is a pretty big wow, but does that yet answer the “so what” question? We need to look at one more of those Psalm 118 quotations in order to get where we need to go today). It is important for us to know what being the cornerstone meant to Jesus. That may have surprised us. What does this mean for us? Let’s hear a little more from the Apostle Peter. Maybe he can answer the “so what” question).

III. THE CORNERSTONE TO US (1 Peter 2:1-12)

- A. We are attached to the cornerstone and infused with life (if, in fact, we belong to Him). We can evaluate that in the following way:
 1. An incredible privilege – Association with and connection to the Lord Jesus makes it possible for us, like the priests of old, to be able to offer acceptable sacrifices to God! (Sacrifices? Body, broken and contrite heart, praise, living sacrifice ...) We have a set-apart status with God! Not just anyone could offer a sacrifice to God and not just any sacrifice would do. God severely judged people for offering sacrifices when they were not qualified to do so. But because we are attached to Christ, this great privilege is ours! And what we offer to Him, He gladly accepts!
 2. A tremendous honor – Faith in Christ results in the end of shame in relation to our sin. Gone are my guilt and my shame. No wonder Peter can say, **“So the honor is for you who believe.”** That God would honor us is beyond comprehension, but it is true! However, such a position carries with it ...
 3. A reasonable duty – That duty includes putting away that which is inconsistent with the Lord in whom we are attached. Not to put these things away creates a war in our soul where God had established His peace! When we disobey the Lord, there is turmoil within. There is war in the soul. But as we put off the foolish stuff (wicked, fleshly, worldly, etc.) and focus on the Lord, we begin to develop a spiritual thirst for Him that will on the one hand satisfy but at the same time create an unsatiable desire for more. “This is wonderful. Give me more!”
- B. We are set apart to proclaim His excellencies...(since we are attached to the cornerstone)
 1. He has called us out of darkness into light – Why are we reluctant to make that known to those around us who are stumbling in the darkness? They can't see. We

have the light. Why do we insist on only turning it on when we are in the presence of others who are in the light? When we are together we turn them on and when we separate, we cover them up. It is time to light up the darkness! Lighting up the darkness declares, like nothing else, the excellencies of God!

2. He extends to us His mercy – Surely we remember something of what it was like when we were lost, not aware of the mercy of God, probably assuming that God owed us a favor! But then we saw our sin and our impending doom and we cried out to God, utterly bankrupt, and He gave us His mercy! In the words of Psalm 118:5, **“Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free.”** Is there any news better than that!
3. He enables us to do good – Righteous people do good works. He has declared us righteous, indwelt us with His Holy Spirit and ordained that we do good works! When people see good works, they wonder what the motivation is. As soon as we say, “It is the Lord”, we are proclaiming His excellencies. And along with that...
4. He uses us to bring Him glory – **“that they may see your good works and glorify God on the day of visitation.”** As we proclaim the excellencies of His name, we bring Him glory, and at that point we are doing that for which we were created and saved! God made everything for His glory. The heavens declare it. Creation announces it. Only man tries to steal it away. But when we are saved, we are put in the position to once again declare His excellencies. (How are we doing?)

Conclusion

1. There you have it – the purpose behind the truth that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, rejected by men, but chosen and precious to God ... and to us!
2. In the words of John MacArthur, **“Because the Jewish leaders were looking for the Messiah when Jesus claimed to be the Christ, they examined His claim. Based on their blind hearts and false standards they concluded that He did not measure up, so they rejected Him. Contempt and hatred characterized their rejection; it was unthinkable to them that Jesus could possibly be the cornerstone of God’s kingdom. They viewed Him as one who foolishly denounced their religious system, was too weak and humble to overthrow the occupying Romans and secure the Jews’ national freedom, and was willing to die ignominiously on a cross. He simply did not measure up to any of the Jewish establishment’s expectations. Even though unbelievers have rejected Jesus**

Christ, He is choice and precious in the sight of God. The Father measured Him by the standards of divine perfection and declared, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.' God elected and ordained Christ, as Peter's use of choice indicates. God also considered Jesus precious, which means, 'costly, highly prized, rare, the perfect living cornerstone.

3. And He is our cornerstone. We are joined to Him and because of Him we fit together and we are growing up in Him for the good of the body and the glory of God! We can say with the psalmist, **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...You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you. Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!** Will we say it?
4. Is this our psalm of praise? Or are we singing a different tune? As the Cornerstone, He fits all of life together. If we reject Him and replace Him with something else, eventually our life will collapse and all will be lost. But to trust Him is to be secure forever!