

Psalm 118.22-24—The Messiah Will Be the Rejected Cornerstone

I. Introduction

- a. Though we skimmed 25 chapters of indictment in Jeremiah last week, it ends with great hope. The story of Christmas is the story of a Savior being born. That means Christmas is first an indictment against us because we need a Savior. Yes, that is God loving rebels and changing lives for his glory.
- b. I want to take a minute to suggest some further response to last week's message. Dear brothers and sisters, though we sometimes do, we really have no reason to question God's love for his covenant people. The scene was much worse than I was able to express but God's pursuit of his people did not waver. If he will work like that to save his people then we too can trust that he will work just as hard to save us.
- c. Secondly. Look we all mess up. Again, giving up is the tragedy but trust is the triumph! Trusting God's redemptive process ALWAYS works. Even though exile is not typical for New Covenant people, we can quench the Spirit and harden our hearts.
 - i. May, today, you hear again and respond. His mercy is abundant and free.
- d. Now, today's Advent message. I need to prepare you for this because rejection is normally a sign of wrong doing. The title of the message is: the Messiah will be the rejected cornerstone. If you base your belief that Jesus is the Messiah on whether the leaders of Israel rejected him then you must conclude that he's not the Messiah.
 - i. But what if God had promised years in advance that a sign of the promised Messiah would be that he will be rejected by the builders? That makes our text even more important because he was rejected as we've seen in John.
 - ii. Therefore, rejection is not always a validation of wrong person or wrong doing. In fact, it may very well be a validation for the right person and right doing.
 1. If you take the positions that Jesus holds to the world, do they agree and would they not reject you and your positions? Does that mean Jesus' ways are wrong and that you are wrong? Well, no. All of his ways are right and good.
 - iii. We need to keep this in mind as think about this passage and how to apply it to our lives.

II. Main Point

- a. The Messiah/Child will be the rejected cornerstone and his rejection validates that Jesus was in fact the Promised Messiah that God's people were waiting to come.

III. Outline

- a. The Rock/Stone as a Messianic Title!
- b. Psalm 118—the promise of rejection
- c. Who are the builders that reject?
- d. What does that mean for me?

IV. Exposition

- a. We need to establish that the use of Rock or Stone is a title for the Messiah. So let's see if we can find that out.
 - i. Though I think there is a case to be made about the Stone that Jacob rested his head on and ended up declaring the place, Bethel (house of God), seems to point to something we will know more about later. And by later, Jacob makes a rather clear statement while blessing Joseph at the end of his life.
 1. (Gen. 49:24) his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel)
 2. Joseph arms were made agile by the Rock of Israel.

- ii. Moses commonly refers to God as his Rock (Dt. 32:4, 15, 18, 31). Even the Rock from which water flowed points to the Messiah. That's why God would only have Moses strike the Rock once!
- iii. What comes up as you read these references to the "Rock" is that at some point this title seems to be distinguished from God or Father. When Isaiah speaks of the Rock in 28:16 it the Father who is the one who lays the Stone of Zion.
 - 1. (Isa. 28:16) ¹⁶ therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'
 - 2. As the earlier references are clearly referring to God, here in Isaiah the Stone is distinct from the Father. I can't help but hear some Trinity language here.
- iv. But before we see it in Psalm 118, let's take note of how the Father describes this Stone.
 - 1. Obviously, it is laid by the Father as a foundation in Zion. The Lord is the builder of his own house.
 - 2. Also, the Stone is tested. To be tested means to be approved for the task. Who would put a stone for a foundation of a building that could not hold up the building? If the foundation is bad, the whole house is bad. Yes, this Stone is tested and found to be sound and trustworthy.
 - 3. The Stone is also described as precious. In this sense we should understand it to mean it has an abundance of value. As has always been the case, the more rare a jewel or stone, the more valuable it is. This stone is one of a kind.
 - 4. And finally, this Stone is the Cornerstone that begins the building which makes for a "sure foundation."
- v. I want to be a part of God's House. As we will hear later in 1 Peter, we who believe are the living stones that make up that house. I don't want to be part of a house that will fall because the foundation gives way. Let's be a part of the house with the sure foundation. But who is this Cornerstone?
- b. So, the Stone or Rock is repeatedly a reference for God but also, God seems to lay a distinct Stone in Zion for his house. But in our main passage this morning, Psalm 118 tells us that this cornerstone will be rejected.
 - i. So, one of the identifying marks of this Cornerstone that the Father has laid for his house in Zion, is that it will be rejected.
 - 1. As earlier stated, rejection is normally not a good sign of validation. However, Psalm 118 is prophesying that this is indeed a true mark of this Stone.
 - a. Now, if we have established that this Stone is a reference to God or better yet God's Messiah, then rejection is a necessary way to identify the Promised Messiah.
 - b. No rejection; wrong Messiah.
 - ii. Psalm 118 begins and ends like this: (Ps. 118:1) Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
 - 1. This giving of thanks is bound up in the joy of God's salvation. His Kingdom or his house is being built. The way into his house is through the gate or way. Notice in verse 20 and 21 (Ps. 118:20-21) ²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD; The righteous will enter through it. ²¹ I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me, And You have become my salvation.
 - a. What follows is the section about the rejected cornerstone. Who is this cornerstone and what is its purpose?

- i. I suppose it's strange to ask who a stone is instead of what. But it's no different than attempting to understand who the Lamb is or who the Manna is.
 - ii. This stone is further described in verses (Ps. 118:25-26) ²⁵ O LORD, do save (Hosanna), we beseech You; O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity! ²⁶ Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.
 - 1. We must ask, didn't this happen to Jesus? When he entered Jerusalem, did not the disciples and crowd hail, Hosanna, blessed is he comes in the name of the Lord?
 - 2. Though Psalm 118 does not identify the rejected Stone however in the larger context of the Psalms, they make it clear that this Stone is the Promised Seed of the house of David. This rejected Stone/Child, as Matthew makes clear just before the birth of Jesus that he is a Son of David. And Herod tries to kill this child.
 - a. The promised rejection of the cornerstone is the Promised Messiah, Son of David.
 - iii. Listen, your faith is not blind faith. The evidence is overwhelming if you have eyes to see and ears to hear. Yet, if rejection is a stumbling block for your faith, then you must deal with that because our salvation is bound up in this rejected one.
 - c. Now, we have established that the rejected cornerstone is a mark of the promised Messiah but how are the ones who reject him? Though God is laying this Stone, his builders reject it.
 - i. Whatever this rejection is, Psalm 118 says: (Ps. 118:23) ²³ This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.
 - 1. Marvelous. How are we to think of rejection as marvelous, because it seems unusual? It is unusual but it is wonderful and unexpected.
 - 2. Luke quotes Isaiah 8:13-15 concerning this same rejected Rock also being a Rock of Stumbling.
 - a. I begin here because I think in large part, those who reject the cornerstone are those who stumble over it as well.
 - b. In the Christmas story, there's a passage that helps us know that not only will some stumble but many will be saved!
 - i. Simeon takes this promised Child into his hands and stays: (Lk. 2:29-35) ²⁹ "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word; ³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation, ³¹ Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel." ³³ And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. ³⁴ And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed-- ³⁵ and a sword will pierce even your own soul-- to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."
 - ii. Though rejection is unusual, it was not uncommon. Take for example, the Parable of the Tenants.
 - 1. In Matthew 21:33-46, Jesus explains to the chief priests and Pharisees concerning the vineyard the Master of the house had planted. The tenants never paid rent so the Master sent servants to collect. Sometimes they beat the servants. Other times they

killed the servants. The servants are understood to be the Prophets. Then finally, the Master sends his son.

- a. (Matt. 21:37-39)³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.'³⁹ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.
- b. Jesus immediately ties this parable to the Psalm 118 passage and Jesus' conclusion is this: (Matt. 21:43)⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.
- iii. My conclusion from this is the leaders of Israel are the builders who rejected the cornerstone. After Jesus said this, they sought to arrest him but feared the crowd.
 1. Peter makes the same connection in Acts 4 as he begins speaking to the rulers and elders of Israel: (Acts 4:11-12)¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
- d. So, what does this mean for us?
 - i. It means that the rejection of the cornerstone by the rulers and elders of Israel has resulted in the Father opening his vineyard to the nations! That's us!
 - ii. The rejection of Jesus resulted in the death of Jesus. And his death is a sacrificial payment for the sins of his people. The resurrection is the exalting of the Capstone! He is the beginning and end of God's house! Or, the Alpha and Omega!
 - iii. Indeed, Peter says this: (1 Pet. 2:4-5)⁴ As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
 - iv. We, followers of Christ, are God's house! The foundation is Christ, the Cornerstone and he is the Capstone or Keystone that holds the building together.
 - v. We are to be holy priests who offer up praise to God!
 - vi. This house will not fall.

V. Response

- a. Not all rejection is a sign that you are wrong. The Messiah was rejected but was completely innocent and did everything right.
 - i. It stands to reason, then, that if the Messiah was rejected for being innocent and doing what is right according to God's word, then the same will be true of those who follow him and do as he commanded.
 - ii. In other words, rejection is not always a validation of wrong doing. It could be a validation for doing right. God's word determines what is right.
 - iii. Yes, we do wrong things but that's not the end of it. We trust the Lord's ways are redemptive. We obey his way of dealing with it. Repentance and faith are the ways forward.
- b. Do not fear rejection, brothers and sisters. Do not let acceptance be your god. If acceptance is what you love most then you will do what is necessary to get it...even abandoning Jesus.
 - i. But you don't have to fear. Jesus didn't fear rejection because he was doing the Father's will and because he was the cornerstone, chosen and precious. And those are the same reasons we can hold on to when rejection comes.
 - ii. You will need to trust the Lord and know that your identity is in him. Do not let fear define you. Yes, we will fear at times. But just know that God is at work to comfort you and we need to receive the comfort of the Holy Spirit and grace!

- c. Christ is building his church and the gates of hell will not prevail. He is the cornerstone and Capstone. He is the beginning and end. He is the Builder of God's house!
 - i. In other words, the church has weathered every storm that satan and the world have thrown at her and by God's good grace she will make it to the end in safe and sure hands of our Redeemer and King!
- d. And finally, you have a choice to make. Honor comes to those who believe in the Rejected Stone but for those who do not believe, he is a rock of stumbling because you disobey his word.
 - i. If you repent and believe...come bow your knee to Jesus this is what you will be: (1 Pet. 2:9) you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
 - ii. Come out of the darkness into his marvelous light.