

Jesus as the Rock Psalm

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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You may not realize it but almost every line of that Psalm is directly from what we know as the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is one of those parts of the Bible where there's all kinds of imagery and thoughts and constructs that at times can be a little bit disconcerting and somewhat, can we be honest, confusing, but one thing that is made very very clear is that Jesus Christ is on the throne and we have the privilege of honoring him and worshiping him and serving him for all of eternity. Another reason I love the book of Revelation is because all of the truths expressed therein are rooted in other Scriptures coming to fulfillment and today I want to encourage you to turn to one of those, in fact, today is going to be one of the easiest passages that you've ever turned to in a worship service, the book of Psalms 118. You say, "Why is it the easiest?" Because according to some metrics this is the exact center portion of your Bible. You say, "What do you mean some metrics? You mean we're confused in what the center portion of the Bible is?" Well, it depends on how you determine it. Is it based on the number of chapters? Number of verses? Number of words?

And so you can see there's a lot of different dynamics there but Psalm 118 we find ourselves directly in the middle of the Bible and today before we get in the message, just a little bit of a forewarning here. To begin with, allow me to share with you that today is gonna feel more Bible studyish than it does sermonish, so to speak. In fact, we're gonna go to a lot of different passages this morning as references to the subject matter at hand, but one passage or a couple of passages that we're gonna kind of land on in a few moments is found in the book of Matthew. And I know there's some of you, you like to place your eyes upon the passage so in a few moments we're gonna find ourselves in Matthew 21 and then we're gonna conclude in Matthew 7 in what we know as the famous Sermon on the Mount.

The second thing I want you to be aware of is today may feel a little bit different in the sense that this is what we call a topical message. Now most of you whether you realize it or not, you're used to what we call an expositional message; we take a chapter in the Bible, a passage in the Bible, a parable from the Bible, and we just simply walk through it verse by verse, statement by statement, and just kind of allow it to, shall we say, discern itself, and today we're gonna take one single solitary verse and then we're going to export the theme of this verse throughout the whole of Scripture.

Last but not least, this is not going to be exhaustive today. As you'll see, the subject matter that is at hand if we were to exhaust it, we would be here much past what we know as the lunch hour and maybe even into dinner and/or supper, whichever one you prefer.

So today we go to Psalm 118, one very simple verse, verse 22, that describes Jesus as the rock. We're gonna look today what does the Bible say about Jesus being the rock, Jesus being our rock, and what does that mean for our lives. Verse 22 of Psalm 118,

22 The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

Now I mentioned this is a topical message and so you're like, "Okay, I know there's passages before and there is after, but in the midst of all that's being communicated, this is a prophetic statement regarding whom we know as Jesus Christ, that the rock or the stone that the builders refused has now become the head of the corner. What does that mean for our lives?"

Well, to begin with, let's kind of describe what we're dealing with. If we're gonna talk about a stone, talk about a rock, and Jesus being that rock, we need to describe what this means as far as the totality of Scripture. I want to talk about the source for just a moment. How do we know that this is talking about Jesus? How do we know? I mean, it's easy to infer that and it's easy to filter a passage through our faith and say, "Well, if it's a stone, it's gotta be Jesus." Well, the source or the origin of this concept biblically speaking is rooted back in the book of Deuteronomy, in fact, it's Deuteronomy 32. The Israelites are about to make their way into what we know as the Promised Land. You may or may not be familiar with this but in chapter 32 it's known as the song of Moses. There's a lot of hymns and choruses and poetry that come from this famous section of the Bible where Moses is reflecting on the time in the wilderness and how he's about to deliver his people, come to fruition that which was promised and prophesied literally decades before. There in verse 4 of Deuteronomy 32, he refers to the Lord, he says the Lord God is the Rock, and it uses the capital letter there. He is the Rock.

Why is that significant? Well, the rock was pretty critical in that wilderness experience. Remember the Israelites, they've come out, they've come through the Red Sea and they began to complain. They said, "Were there not enough graves in Egypt, Moses? Why did you bring us all the way out here to die? I mean, we're gonna die of thirst." He cries out to the Lord, you remember what he called them? He said, "I'm amidst of a bunch of stiff-necked people here. I don't know what to do with these folks." And the Lord said, "There's a rock. Go take that rock and strike it and water will flow forth." And water did. Now 38 years later, Moses was told to speak to the rock, he decided to strike the rock, and it didn't turn out too well for him and we'll talk about that toward the end of the message. But Moses declares that that rock was the Lord. The Lord provided, he and he alone.

When you get to 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, the Apostle Paul is going back into the story of the exodus as an illustration of you and I as believers; that we come out of the bondage of our sin; that we're eventually going to what we know as the Promised Land that we would oftentimes refer to as heaven. And looking back into the story of Deuteronomy and in the exodus, it talks about that the Lord delivered them and he provided for them, and that that rock, listen to what it says in verse 4, "that Rock was Christ Jesus."

Why is that important? Because when it says here the stone the builders rejected has become the "head stone or the chief stone or the corner stone," what the Bible is saying is the Messiah Jesus Christ is the one the builders rejected. It is Jesus Christ who is the head of the corner. Whether you go to the Old Testament or you go to the New Testament, wherever you go this idea of a stone or a rock, its sources, its origin is rooted in the person of Jesus Christ but the substance is a tad bit, shall we say, unique. You say, "Well, the substance? We know that Jesus Christ came, he was born, he lived, he went under all temptations known to man, he rejected them, he experiences all the toils of humanity and eventually gave his life on a cross and rose from the dead three days later." Yes, but you realize that is just a 33 ½ year time period of his eternal existence. You realize that's just a blip on the radar of his existence.

You know, back in the book of Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar, the same individual who had this opportunity, shall we say, to take the Israelites captive, Nebuchadnezzar goes back to his homeland, Daniel's there, Shadrach, Meshech, Abednego, the whole crew is there, and one night he wakes up, he's had a horrible dream. He knows it's bad but he can't even remember what he dreamed so he sends a message throughout the whole land, "Anybody who can tell me not only the interpretation but what I dreamed, I will promote them." Well, the soothsayers, the Chaldeans, the sorcerers, they all show up and they say, "Nebuchadnezzar, I mean, come on, give us a break. It's one thing to interpret a dream but to tell you what you actually dreamed, we can't do that." So what does he say? "All of you, off with your heads." The word goes out to eliminate all of the ones who claimed to have insight to the holy things of life but Daniel raises his hand, he says, "I don't understand what your dream was but I know one who does, the Lord himself. Give me one night, just one night." So he fasts and he prays and the other believers fast and they pray and that night the Lord gives him the dream. It's very famous. It's this incredible statue. It's got a head of gold, arms of silver, a torso of brass, legs of iron and feet that are mired with iron and clay, and as he begins to interpret it, he tells Nebuchadnezzar, "You are that head. You are that gold. You are the one who is the sole ruler of the world right now but there's coming those after you."

We discover throughout Scripture that the book of Daniel, this incredible dream that Nebuchadnezzar has and the Lord interprets through Daniel is a picture of the world empires, the kingdoms of the world from Nebuchadnezzar until, you guessed it, the Lord Jesus Christ returns because there in Daniel 2:34-35 it says this image that has the feet and the toes that are mixed with different materials, that there is a, you guessed it, a stone that comes out of heaven and that stone comes down with such great force that it hits the feet and it destroys the entirety of the image. Now when I talk about the substance, here's what's interesting about Daniel 2, it says it is a stone that is cut without hands. In other

words, we don't need to be thinking of some type of meteorite; we don't need to be thinking of some rock falling out of the sky like they warn us at least every 6 to 12 months that's gonna get, you know, within a couple hundred thousands miles of us and could cause all kinds of chaos. No, the substance. We're talking God himself.

And so when it talks about here the stone that the builders rejected, that which has become the head of the corner, when we begin to look at it biblically and begin to describe it, we're talking about God himself, Jesus Christ is the rock, he is the stone, and one day he is coming and when he does, he said he will take all of man's best endeavors and greatest power structures and he will cause them all to crumble. Now the thing that we need to understand, though, today is not just the description but we need to understand what the distinctions are of this stone. Now this next part may seem a little bit strange to you. Now I mentioned this is more Bible study than it is sermon but it's gonna get sermonic here in a moment, I promise you. Let's talk about the shape for just a moment. You say, "The shape of the stone, does it really matter?" Well, it doesn't really matter except that it helps us to understand the next aspect of the message.

Now a stone, as you well know, comes in a variety of shapes and we've already mentioned the fact that we're not talking about the physical earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, this image we have of God coming is as a stone the builders rejected, it is now the head of the corner. The illustration we have is that Jesus, as we just read and just saying, is a corner stone. Now if you and I were to build a building, a home, an office complex, a football stadium that hopefully we will play some ball in in the next couple of months, I mean if we were to build anything of any nature, you always when you have the foundation laid, you always place what you and I would call a corner stone. Why? Because it is that piece that will make sure that everything else is true. It is that piece that will determine that once you begin to build multiple storeys and floors and as it goes out wide, if the corner stone is off, then you've got a whole lot of problems.

You say, "Well, what about the shape? What does it matter? Doesn't that determine on what kind of building you're building?" Yes. In some cases it might be somewhat of a cubicle or cubic type entity. In some cases it may be rectangular, whatever it may be, but I want you to see what the Bible says about Jesus as the "corner stone." You know, the Bible makes this interesting statement in the book of 2 Corinthians that you and I are not to be unequally yoked. It's talking about our marriages, it's talking about our business dealings, it's talking about a whole lot of aspects of life. It says that as believers that we are to live with and to live life with other believers and you get the imagery there. You say, "Why is that important?" Because when you get to Revelation 21, the final judgment's already taken place, Jesus has already descended, eternity has begun. It says, "And I saw a new heaven, a new earth and a new Jerusalem. I saw a holy city coming out of the heavens as a bride adorned for her husband." Well, that husband, again, that picture is Jesus Christ and here's what's interesting, that new Jerusalem, that city in verse 16 of chapter 21 is pictured as having the same length, width and depth. In other words, it is of such a form that all of its sides are equal.

Now I know what some of you are thinking, "Why is this important to an understanding of Jesus being the stone the builders rejected?" Work with me for just a moment. In other words, if we were to build a home, an office complex, a football stadium, whatever, as its cornerstone that centerpiece that's up top. You say, "Why is that significant?" Because in Ephesians 5 it says Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He's not that which we stand upon, he is that which is over us, and if you are going to measure for a "corner stone" of that which is pyramidal in shape, it is in the center and at the top, not in the corner and on the edge. Jesus Christ was never designed to be in the corner and on the edge and under our feet. He was designed to be at the center of our lives, on top of our lives, over our lives.

I know you're thinking, "Well, why is that important that it is a 'pyramid shape versus a cube shape'? I mean, is this of incredible eternal consequence?" I want you to see the scenario. All of this, for lack of better terms, is just a long introduction to Matthew 21. Hopefully those of you that like to lay eyes on the Scripture, Matthew 21, Jesus is giving us an interesting scenario. We are just hours away from his crucifixion. He tells the parable of the famous vineyard. It's the story of a man who has this incredible piece of land, this prosperous vineyard that he leaves to the people, and he puts a husbandman in charge of it, then he sends servants, and they stone this one and they kill that one, and eventually he says, "Well, surely they won't hurt my son." He sends the heir and what do they say? "We can now have the entirety of the inheritance if we kill his heir." You see the imagery, right? This is a picture of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and how humanity has consistently responded to God's moving in their lives.

He speaks the parable, verse 41, the people respond. They don't quite understand, they don't quite get it and I want to begin in verse 42 of Matthew 21 and I want you to hear Jesus' explanation of the parable of the vineyard, what he quotes from the Old Testament is gonna sound very familiar to what we've already read. He said, "Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Now when you look at the scenario that's being presented, the entirety of the parable is about those who have rejected the one who built the vineyard and so this famous verse we read back in Psalm 118 that is quoted here by Jesus, the stone that the builders rejected has become the head, corner, or the centerpiece, or the corner stone of our lives, what does he say? He says, "Oh, there'll be those that stumble and those that stumble, eventually they will be ground to powder."

Let me give you the scenario here. In one single verse Jesus is sharing with us the consequences of rejecting him both at what we call the First Coming and the Second Coming. Can we all agree that at his "First Coming" many a people rejected him? In fact, those who should have believed said, "Crucify him! Crucify him! Let his blood be on us and our children." You say, "What did they stumble on?" They stumbled on their

religion. They stumbled on their tradition. And the irony is they thought that that which was a sure foundation would be that which they would stumble upon.

Allow me to illustrate. Those of you may not know this but it's just absolutely true. My wife is a much better athlete than I am and I know that probably goes without saying when you see our boys, but nonetheless she's a better athlete. And about, I don't want to give a quantifiable number but a good majority of the days in the morning, she gets up and she walks with a group of ladies and when I say walk, I mean they're moving. I'll be honest, I don't know how my wife does it. I know y'all tease me all the time about our height or our lack thereof, but my wife, I mean, she's actually shorter than me. I know that's hard to believe but she is, and she walks with a group of ladies that none of them are shorter than me. Their legs, I mean, literally go up to my armpits. I don't know how she does it and I've seen them walking around town. I mean, there's this big, old, long strides of these ladies and here's my wife, I mean, she's just moving.

Well, every now and then she talks me into going walking with her. I have a hard time keeping up to begin with and, I mean, she is at a pace I cannot keep up with. Here's the thing: if you are walking at such a pace as that, or it can be a slower pace for the illustration, have you ever been going down a sidewalk or even at a walking track or in the street where you hit something you didn't see coming with the edge of your toe? Now we all see that curve coming, right? Hopefully. We all see that drop-off, hopefully. The problem is when you've got something that's just a little bit higher than something else, or you've got something that's just a little bit off, shall we say, plumb from something else. You never see it coming and at that pace, what happens? You face-plant right there on the track because you never saw it coming.

Now I want you to think about the imagery, that cube versus a pyramid. If you saw something like an Amazon box sitting in the road, even if it was smaller in nature, it would catch your eye. But something that was pointed at the top, it's something that you just normally walk right over. What happened? These individuals, they stumbled over their tradition, they stumbled over their religion and do not we fall into the same trap? How many times do we ignore the things of the Lord in our lives because that's just not the way we do things? How many times do we say, "Well, I understand this and I understand that, but according to what I've heard, according to what momma said, or according to what my pastor said, or according to what Baptists say, or according to whatever they say"? You see, we've got the same problem, we stumble because we've rejected.

What's the problem with stumbling? What does it say at the end? "They shall fall and shall be ground to powder." You see, that's where Daniel 2 comes in. The same stone, the same Jesus that we trip over and say, "Oh, it's not that big a deal because according to my tradition, according to my religion," one day will grind us to powder. That's a pretty vivid illustration of the end of the book of Revelation 20. You know, we just heard earlier in song about thunders and lightnings and strength and power and glory, and yet all of that, think about it, it says, "I saw the dead, small and great, free and bond, stand before the Lord; and the books or works were opened up." Now those of you that are believers, don't

panic. We're already with the Lord. We're already written in the book of life. We're already behind him. Everything's good. These are for those that have stumbled. What does it say? They were judged according to their works.

This is where Matthew 7 comes in. Turn just a few pages to the left. I want to talk about the danger of this passage. You know, we read that verse about Jesus is the stone that was rejected by the builders, he is the head of the corner, let me tell you about the danger here. Matthew 7, Jesus is finishing up what we know as the Sermon on the Mount, one of the most beloved passages in all the Bible, "Blessed are these and blessed are those." By the time you get to the end of the Sermon on the Mount, if you have read it with an honest heart of integrity, you realize that you are guilty of something you shouldn't have done. I mean, at some point one of the things Jesus lays out you are guilty thereof, I am guilty thereof, and we determine that the one thing we need more than anything is Jesus. That's how you ought to read what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. If you read the Sermon on the Mount and said, "Oh, I got this," then you missed it, is what happened.

When you get to verse 21 of chapter 7, one of the most dangerous passages in all of the Bible, I want you to see the scene here. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have we not cast out devils? and in thy name have we not done wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity." Do you see the stumbling there? "But God, look at all the times that I did this, and look at all the times I did that." Notice that all of them are – listen – religious in nature. Here's the scene: that final day of "judgment" has occurred, it's much like in Noah's day of the ark, the door has been shut, eternity has been established and you've got a group of people who are on the wrong side of the door that think they should be on the other side. What's their excuse? "I did stuff. I gave stuff. I said stuff." What does Jesus say? "I never knew you." You see, the stumbling block when it comes to Jesus, the stumbling that we often do is not a "lack of belief in him," it's too much belief in ourselves; that I have the capacity to be good; I have the capacity to give; I have the capacity to do. And really what happens is there's a group of us collectively that thinks, "I've so got it together that I really don't need his blood, I really don't need his sacrifice because I've got this." That's a pretty dangerous scene. That's a group of people who from a human perspective we would have given them plaques and awards and honored them at banquets and he says, "I never knew you."

That's the "scene." I want you to notice the surety of this passage beginning in verse 24, "Therefore whosoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof." Let me tell you the surety thereof: you're going to have storms in life. If you don't believe me, watch the news. We're in a big one right now.

You're gonna have floods of life. You're gonna have the torment of life and it's not just in this life, we're all one day according to Hebrews 9, we're gonna stand before God himself and here's the big issue: was your life built on sand or on a rock? Now a lot of times we think we built it on a rock and we put provisions in and we've made means and such in this, but we discover it's just shifting sand. Why? Because who is the rock? The rock is Jesus. Here's what he's basically saying at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. We've all struggled, we've all messed up, we've all done things we shouldn't have done, said things we shouldn't have said, and thought things we shouldn't have thought, he deals with our thoughts by the way in the Sermon on the Mount, and he gets to the end and he says, "Alright, so everybody's got a life to live, everybody's got a journey to take. At the end of the day, you either build it on your tradition, your religion, or what somebody else encourages you to do, or you build it upon a rock."

You know, to conclude today, Jesus stood before his apostles, Matthew 16, and he asked them a very important question, "Who does the world say that I am?" "Oh, some think you're Jeremiah. Some think you're John the Baptist. Some think you're this, some think you're that." He says, "Who do you say that I am?" Remember Simon Peter speaks of, he says, "Oh, you're the Christ. You're the Son of the living God." "Ah," he says, "Simon Barjona, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father which is in heaven." And then Jesus makes a very interesting statement, "Upon this rock I will build my church."

Now let me share with you how the majority of humanity has erred. Those from a "Roman Catholic" tradition believe that rock is Simon Peter. Those from a Protestant background tend to believe it was his profession of faith. But what did we just show you in the Bible? It's neither. The rock, Jesus was saying, "Upon this rock," he is the rock that the builders have rejected. He is the rock that tradition and religion has led way too many people to a devil's hell because it's not about what we "say." Isn't that what they did in Matthew 7? But what did we do and what did we say? Did you build it upon him, the rock? And today not only as we look into eternity but as we look at what the next news story is going to be, we've discovered we live in a world of shifting sand, do we not? We need Jesus, the rock, to be the foundation of our lives.