

“The Stone the Builder’s Rejected” Acts, 4:5-12 Jerry Arnold, Sept. 2, 2006

“...that You are just a prayer away, and we are praying to You now Lord; and I am asking on behalf of those that are in attendance that You would manifest Yourself in a powerful and marked, and Devine, supernatural way. We pray that You would flood this auditorium with Your presence. That Angels will come and create an environment, and an atmosphere of Heaven, and that You would move up and down the pews with Your Spirit, speaking to each one of us the vary words we need to hear. Lord we are asking for miracles to take place during this worship time. As we open Your word we pray that hearts would be won to You, that minds would be changed, that homes would be mended and that lives would be put back together. Lord please, be powerful in our midst today, we ask this all in Jesus name, Amen.”

When I was a young pastor, I was given a three church district. And we pastured these three small churches in Southern Indiana. We had been there couple of years, and in one of the small churches there was a lady who wanted to get baptized. Her name was, Louise. And Louise and I had been studying the Word of God together, and her husband was there, he had been baptized earlier, and now she wanted to be. She had a connection with the church in the past, but never made a decision to join, nor had she ever been baptized, so she was pretty excited about it. And I was visiting with her on a Thursday night, and she was going to get baptized on the following Saturday morning. And I was going through the list of what to expect; I would bring a robe, and what she could wear underneath it and that type of stuff. And I said, some ladies because of their hair, they like to wear these rubber swim things. What are they called? Swim caps, bathing cap, yes, thank you. They like to wear those bathing caps and then their hair doesn’t get wet. Would you like one? She said, “Yes, I really would.” And I made a mistake as a young Pastor, I said, “fine, I will get you one.” Now that was a mistake because it was hard to find one. And Friday afternoon, after the chores were done at the house, I went out looking for a bathing cap for this lady.

We lived in a small town; there were only three possible places to go to even look. There, and then a gas station that had a convenient market, but I knew I wouldn’t find one there. And so I went to one store, they didn’t have any, I went to another store, and they didn’t have any, and I looked up and down, up and down, all through the store trying to find a bathing cap and I couldn’t find one. And time was getting short, it was closing in on the Sabbath, and I was desperate. I promised this lady that I would get a bathing cap for her, she was expecting it. So I got the attention of one of the clerks there and I said, “Do you have any bathing caps?” And she said, “Well, I don’t know”, she said, “if we do, they’ll be in the boxes back somewhere along the wall,” and they were having a summer close out. And so, I was going through all this stuff, and I found a bathing cap. And I wasn’t happy though, because this bathing cap was florescent, lime green. A plane could have land it by it. It was so bright! But that wasn’t the worst part. On the side, was this huge purple and yellow flower, it just kind of dangled like this; and it’s the only bathing cap in town. What are you going to do? Well I bought it, and went home. And I don’t know how

many times my wife said, “No, no, no, no” and I am thinking, “I have to, I have to, I have to!” It’s all I have to offer.

And so the next morning, after a rather sleepless night for me, I arrived at church, ready for the baptism. I had this bathing cap in a sack. And she asked for it. I knew decision time had come! Not for me, for her! Because she was either going to accept it or reject it. It would either be love or hate; there would be no neutrality with this florescent, lime green, purple flowered bathing cap. And so I remember reaching in to that sack, thinking, “Here it comes, either acceptance or rejection.”

I’d like to study that with you today. Please turn to Acts chapter 4. We are continuing our series in the book of Acts. Peter and John have healed the lame man, they were arrested, they spent the night in jail. Now they were brought in front of the Sanhedrin counsel, and we are going to read verses 5-12. Acts chapter 4, 5-12; verse 5 says, “And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, “By what power or by what name have you done this?” Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the *‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’* Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Now we want to understand the Scriptures the way God wants us to understand the Scriptures. So, the first question we want to ask is “What did it mean to these people back then?” And then we’ll ask the question, “What did it mean to us?” And in particular verse 11, “the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.” So we are going to have a Bible study today about that corner stone, and then we’ll understand what is going on back in this experience and we will better understand how to apply it to our lives. Please turn to Isaiah chapter 28, our first passage dealing with the corner stone. Isaiah 28 verse 16. This is its first recording in the Word of God. Isaiah mentions it in chapter 8, but we are going to read that quoted in the New Testament, so we won’t go there, but Isaiah is the first prophet to mention the idea of the cornerstone.

And in verse 16 he says this: “Behold I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily.” Now before we go on, let’s deal with the last part, “whoever believes will not act hastily.” That simply means, “Will not become alarmed.” That in the service of this cornerstone, the surety of that foundation, and the belief of that, and individual can face life, move forward with confidence and trust in God. And life will not overwhelm them by its trying circumstances. Today that was lived out for us during the second service. A young lady stood up to sing and the microphone, for what ever reason was not on. It wasn’t working!

She kept singing! And she reached over, and got this microphone, and just kept singing. And then I heard her tap it gently, and you could hear it, “chick” it clicked, and she started singing into the microphone. She never lost a beat. She never got frazzled, she just kept moving forward, trusting and confident in God. That’s an illustration of what it means here to “not move hastily, or to act hastily.”

Now let’s do a little background to Isaiah, so you’ll understand what is happening here. Isaiah writes from 740 BC to 680 BC. So about 700 years before Jesus he writes this. And he is the one who first introduces the idea to Israel about this cornerstone being a sure foundation. The next place we see it is Psalm 118. And you are thinking already, wait the minute; Psalm 118 after Isaiah 28, how could that be? I am so grateful you asked the question, now I will seek to answer it. How many of you are aware that David did not write all of the Psalms? Are you familiar with that? Very good! The Psalms actually are collection of poems and songs that are collected over 1000 year time period, beginning 1400 BC all the way down to 400 BC. David lives 1000 years before Christ. So 400 years before David was alive, they were already writing some of this Psalms. And of course many years after David, they were still writing these Psalms. And they were compiled together. Psalm 118 is one of the later Psalms. In fact, Psalm 118 was written after Daniel. Psalm 118 was written after Ezra and Nehemiah come back and the temple is built. It is written sometime 400 years before Christ.

Well, let’s read verses 21-26, Psalm 118: “I will praise You, for You have answered me, and have become my salvation. The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I pray, o Lord; o Lord, I pray, send now prosperity. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.” Here, Psalm 118 verse 22, “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.”

That idea is mentioned again, some 300 years after Isaiah. Now Psalm 118 is an important part of the Bible. Psalm 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, and 118 make up six Psalms known as the “hallel.” The halel, Psalms or chance of praise, “hallelujah,” what does that mean? Praise yeah the Lord! “Yah,” Yahweh, short for God. Hallel, praise! This is the “Hallel”! There were 6 songs that they sang in all of the gatherings of Israel. All of their feast days, and all of their gatherings, they would sing this 6 hallel songs. Their praise songs, they knew them, they understood them. Everybody learned them when they were children, and they would love to sing them. They were antiphonal songs so that one would sing on this side, and there would be a response over here, like an echo. And they just had this beautiful chanting and music going on.

Now notice Psalm 118 verse 1. “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.” Look at verse 29, “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever!” Do you notice anything? Same identical verse! Psalm 118 is the original song that has no end. They would be singing this song, and they would come to verse 29 which is exactly verse 1, and if another crowd came up and they would hear them sing verse 29, they would join in and well, “let’s do it again!” And they’ll just

go on and on and on, it was the song that had no end. They loved this song. It was about their Messiah. It was about the hope that they had, it was about God saving them, and they looked forward to the day, when they could, quote, verse 26: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Have you ever heard that quoted in the New Testament? Go with me to Matthew chapter 21. Now all this is 400 years before Jesus when it originates. So by the time when Jesus comes along, you have about 400 year history of people singing the “hallel” songs; these praises, these prophetic songs about their deliverance, about salvation and about their Messiah. And in Matthew 21 verse 7 it says: “They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; other cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! *‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’* Hosanna in the highest!”

They on that Sunday, when Jesus rode the colt into town, on that Sunday, before He would die on Friday, they sing the “hallel” blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Now, for those who had accepted Jesus, what are they saying? He is the Messiah! And can you begin to understand why those who were opposed to Him, began to hate Him even more? He was stealing their “hallels.” They wanted to praise God! Jesus is claiming to be the Son of God. Jesus is claiming to be the Messiah. He is allowing these people to sing the “hallel” to Him. Who does He think He is? And they became indignant.

Now stay here in Matthew 21, and we are going to move to verse 23. This is Tuesday, same week, Jesus will die on Friday. Jesus says here another parable. So He has already told one parable. Who is He talking to? Go to verse 23. “Now when Jesus came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?” He answers those questions with a question, and then He tells the parable of two sons, then He adds this parable. The parable of the land owner! Look at verse 33, Jesus says: “Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit.”

Basically what it is saying, a man owned property. He turned it into a farm, he leased the farm out, and at harvest time he came for the payment from those who were renting the farm from him. It goes on, in verse 35: “And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them.” Now Jesus is telling the story of the nation of Israel. God had lands, called it Canaan, He established them in Canaan, and the fruit that they were supposed to return to Him was obedience to Him. They were to honor Him! And they didn’t; and so God sent prophets. They stoned one, beat one, killed one, stoned another, and it goes on. And they did like wise when he sent other servants. Verse 37: “Then last

of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore," Jesus asked, "When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?"

Notice who answers! The chief priests and the elders of the people! Verse 41: "They said to Jesus, 'He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.'" Now, they just pronounced judgment on themselves. Jesus says, "Did you never read in the Scriptures?" And then He quotes Psalm 118, the hallel. Now picture what Jesus is doing here. These are the worship leaders of the nation of Israel. They are the ones who taught the people these songs! They had been taught those songs themselves. Jesus says, "Did you never read in the scriptures, '*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes*'?" Notice this: "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And who ever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

What is Jesus saying? Jesus is saying to us today, "don't worry about a geographical location called Israel! Don't worry about an ethnic group of people called, Israelites or Jews." When it comes to prophecy, the people of God are those who are following Jesus Christ, that's where you look for the fulfillment of prophecy! That's what He is saying! But, He says: "Whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." No indecision when it comes to this stone! You make a decision, you humble yourself upon the rock, or that rock will grind you to powder. Verse 45: "Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them."

Yeah, hello! So they sought to kill Him. But they couldn't because they feared the multitude. It's fascinating, that's the same experience Peter and John will have. They want to kill them, but they can't because they are in favor with the people. But later as we read in the book of Acts, they'll get the people to turn against the church. And then persecution will break out.

Well let's (we'll skip Mark's account because it's basically the same as Matthew's) but look what Luke says. Luke adds one more dimension that is fascinating. Luke chapter 20 verse 16. Luke adds this: after the leaders have pronounced judgment upon themselves and their nation, Jesus will repeat back to them that it is true. He says in verse 16, chapter 20 of Luke in verse 16: "He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others." "And when they heard it, they said, 'Certainly not!'" You know what that means? Some of your Bibles have it recorded, "May it never be!" What it really means is, "God forbid!" They were under tremendous conviction.

Now, Paul will pick up on a theme of a cornerstone, he will write about it in Ephesians. Peter will write about it later in First Peter, and we'll go there in a few moments, but let's

go back to the Book of Acts for a minute. Now that we have a little bit of a background, we can understand what it meant to these people back then. When you come to Acts chapter 4 verse 8, it says: "Then Peter filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders of Israel.'" Now this is a study of how to share your faith with people who have authority over you, who don't agree with you. He is very polite. But this Peter, who cowered under the questions of a servant girl, will stand strong before those leaders in Israel because he is filled with the Spirit of God now. He'll be sweet, but this guy is chocolate covered steel, strong now. He will not bend, or yield, or be broken, and it goes on where he says: "If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified,..." was that true? Yes it was, he is not betting an eye, he is telling the truth. "Whom God raised from the dead ..." was that true, yes! Did they want to hear that, no! "...by Him this man stand here before you whole."

Now this is where it gets very interesting. Now that we have a little background, we can begin to understand verse 11. But before you turn to verse 11 I've got to give you one more piece of the puzzle. Do you know what elders were called back in the days when Jesus lived and walked on the earth? They were called builders. They were to build the nation, they were to build the people up, they were builders. Now, with this background, notice the courage of Peter, verse 11: "This..." Jesus is what he is saying, "...is the stone which was rejected by you builders..." could it be any clearer? "...which has become the chief cornerstone." And then he goes on to add: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Wow, "you rejected Him" he is saying, "and He is the cornerstone, He is the 'Hallel', He is the One we are to praise, and you builders rejected him. "There is no other name given among men, were by we maybe saved but through Him."

Do you think they liked that? I tell you they were offended by it. They didn't like it all. How could it be that men who studied about the Messiah, talked about the Messiah, prayed for the Messiah to come, sang songs about the Messiah, how could it be when Messiah came, they rejected Him? How could it be? Jesus made claims, He claimed He was the Son of God, and He claimed He was the only way to heaven. They didn't like that, they didn't like either way. It was not a popular message back then. And let me ask you something; is that a popular message today? No, in fact, if you want to be repulsive in the work place, you share with your associates, "there is only one way to heaven, and it's Jesus," and I am telling you, you will be hulked on. Our culture has come to a place where they don't believe in absolute truth in any way. "It might be what floats your boat, but don't tell me what's right and what's wrong," and so on and so forth, and if you want to be obnoxious to people, you say "there is only one way to go heaven, and that's Christ!"

But I am telling you that's what the Bible teaches. And we have reached the point where Satan, clever as he is, knows he can't just go out and hack Christians up and have them killed, because it doesn't stop anything. The Gospel lives on. So he's brought us to a point where it's embarrassing to say there is only one way to heaven. And he works on

our ego and that's how he paralyzes the church. We want to be accepted, I want to be accepted, don't you? I don't want to be considered a "Nut", I don't want to be considered an "Irritant," I don't want any of that. But the truth is brothers and sisters, there is only one way to heaven, it's Christ! He is the stone. And everybody's future depends on what they do with that stone?

Now I want to share some good news with you. Turn to 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, chapter 2. Peter will refer to this stone in a powerful message for us. He says in verse one, "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." If you've tasted God, continue on he is saying. Here we go, verse 4, "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Then he says, "Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, '*Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.*' Therefore, to you who believe, Jesus is precious; but to those who are disobedient, '*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone*' and '*A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.*' They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you are a chose generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the 'hallel,'" do you see that? You are the ones to proclaim the hallel, you are the ones to praise God for His mercies and His goodness. It says, "The praises of Him who called you out of darkens into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

That's us in Christ; a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a special people in the eyes of God. You know one of the fascinating things about this stone which the builders rejected; I thought about doing the whole sermon on this, but I'll share with you in one minute the point. In this life it's not often that we are really appreciated. It's not often at work that we feel really appreciated. It's not often in the home that we feel really appreciated, or in the church, it's not often that we feel appreciated. Sometimes we feel devalued, and sometimes even rejected. But here is good news: Your Savior knows what it is like to be rejected, and He will comfort you. Your value and my value is not how others think of us, but God declaring we are special and precious in His eyes because of Christ. Keep looking up, keep looking up!

Jesus came and those who'd studied about Him, talked about Him, prayed for Him, and sang about Him, rejected Him because they didn't want to humble themselves before Him.

I stood there with that sack. I knew, oh man, this is it! It's either going to be acceptance or rejection. And it's time, I couldn't delay anymore. So I pulled out the florescent, lime-green bathing cap with the purple and yellow flower bouncing on the side. I held it up, reached out toward Louise, and she went, "Ah, it's beautiful! Can I keep it?" "Yes, you can keep it." And I'll never forget the smile on her face and the look of that flower

bouncing with water spraying all around this as I brought her up out of the tank; she had accepted that simple little bathing cap.

You know brothers and sisters, when it comes to Jesus, we either accept Him or we reject Him. There is no neutrality, there is no I'll get back later type stuff, it's we humble ourselves or we begin to reject Him. And I don't know where you are at today, but I know where the Lord wants you to be. He wants to be in your heart, and He wants you to be singing praises to Him. He wants you to be tasting of Him and knowing that He is wonderful, and you are desiring for more. That's what He is longing for in your life. And in essence it simply boils down to this. Will you let Him love you? And if you will, if you will let Jesus save you from sin, if you will humble yourself and ask Him to come into your heart, I am going to ask you to stand right where you are at.

Father in heaven, thank you for Jesus; a cornerstone, a precious, wonderful foundation, we stand on Him today, and we ask for Him to come into our hearts. And for You to save us through Him, we pray this in Jesus name, Amen.