

The Stone

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 April 2016

Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 0 0] Matthew 21 we read at verse 44 whosoever shall fall from this stone shall be broken but on whosoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder. Jesus in this verse is referring to himself as the stone verse 42 which the builders rejected the same having become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes and of course in doing so when he says did you never read in the scriptures he's quoting Psalm 118 and verses 22 and 23. The stone which the builders refused has become the headstone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing. It is marvellous in our eyes. He's quoting scripture to back up his position because as Jesus himself would teach and as the scripture itself teaches throughout that all of scripture is pointing ultimately to him. It is all fulfilled in him.

He then is his stone which is the head of the corner. Now when he makes reference in verse 44 whosoever shall fall in this stone shall be broken. The senses of the stone having been cast away by the builders looking at it thinking oh this one's no use throwing it to the ground but it thumps down and then somebody walking along not really paying any attention trips against it falls down and crashes against it and they damaged themselves. They damaged themselves because they were blind to the stone in their pathway or they were blind to its importance or they did not see that it was right there in front of them. Now this is a reference or rather an illustration of many who go through their lives not recognizing the importance of Jesus in those lives. We had in the children's address the little lepergy Jesus is Lord and he is the Lord of everything. He is the Lord of all but so many go through their lives not recognizing the importance of this headstone of the corner. And so as they go through lives that they think are just their own and they think they're just doing their own thing and they're looking about all over the place everywhere except where they ought to be everywhere except upon Jesus they stumble they trip they stub their toe and they come crashing down onto the stone but the stone itself is not damaged by that.

The stone itself will not be moved. The stone itself will not be weakened. So often people think that somehow if they just decide to have nothing to do with God if they decide to have nothing to do with the Lord that he is made weak and he is set at naught. He is diminished in the eyes of the world because hey me I myself I'm not having anything to do with him. I'm ignoring him. I am just living my life as if he wasn't there. The stone is not affected by that. The stone will stay there where it has been cast until finally it is lifted up where it ought to be. In the meantime those who will not pay it heed will stumble against it, will trip, will fall and as they come crashing down onto it will be broken by it. You see it's no virtue to go through life ignoring Christ but telling yourself well I have nothing against him. You know I'm not anti-Christian. I'm not anti-God or anti-Christian. I just want to live my own life. I don't see the importance of

Jesus. They do not see the stone upon the ground in front of them. They do not see its proximity. They do not see how near he is to them. They do not see how powerful and strong is that stone. They are completely unmindful of it. And so they trip. They fall against it. And as a result they are themselves broken.

The alternative of course which is found here in the second part of verse 44 is those on whom the stone shall fall. It will grind into power. There's two ways we can understand this. It can either be those who rather than going through their lives in blind indifference have instead set themselves against the Lord and against his people and against his witness and are determined to try and wipe it out.

[4 : 3 1] These are they who don't simply stumble against the stone, don't simply live their lives as though they were looking at everything else except Jesus. They have focused upon that which is of the Lord and are determined to destroy it. But instead it will fall upon them. And when it does it will grind them to powder. If one is not going to stumble against the stone, if one is not going to have it

fall upon one's self. Then what is the right way to deal with the stone? Well the right way to deal with the stone is what even the builders themselves didn't do. Is to recognize where it should be. The head of the corner or the capstone as it's sometimes translated. To be right up there at the top from which everything else all fits together. All the building quickly joins together. If that stone is not what it ought to be, nothing else is going to be right. To lift it up and put it in that place of supreme importance is where it will serve the purpose for which it was intended. We will get the benefit of it being where it ought to be and everything that is built from it and around it will prosper and be strengthened. That is the right effort to have with regard to this stone. But nobody was doing it. Not the leaders, not the

Jews themselves, not even the crowds. When Jesus tells the parable earlier on in the passage we read of the of the two sons. A certain man of two sons, verse 28, and came to the first said, some go to work today in my vineyard. He answered, I will not. But afterward he repented and he went. And he came to the second and he said likewise, he said, I go, sir. And went, no. Now of course, as it says, you know, the the one did the one did the will of his father rather than the other. The second one was just flattering. He was saying what he thought his father wanted to hear. Yes, sir, I'll go right away. But we don't read that he repented himself and went not. He didn't change his mind. He never intended to go in the first place. We don't read of any change of heart. We don't read that he repented himself and decided not to go. Just he said, I go, sir, and went not. He never intended to go. It was all just words. It was all just his mouth. It was all just to flatter the father and make him think he was hearing what he wanted to hear just to get a quiet life and make him go away. But the other one wasn't exactly doing right either. He initially says, no, I'm not going to work in that. But you don't have other things to do. You don't want to do it. But afterwards, he repented, there was a change in his heart and he went. He did it afterwards. Now, which of them was right? Neither of them were as good as they should be. Neither of them was as right as they should have been. The right answer would be to say, yes, sir, I'll go. Yes, father, of course I'll go and go and do it. But the one says, no, I'm not going to go back. Yeah, he repented. And he did go, that's better than the other one. But the point is that we are all at fault before God. Every one of us has sinned and come short of the glory of God. The reason why there is need for repentance is because we get it wrong in the first place. Some time ago, I was thinking earlier on, what should be the subject matter for this sermon this morning? For some reason, don't ask me why,

I'm not getting all morbid about it or anything. The thought came into my mind, if you had only one sermon left to preach, if you could only preach one sermon in your entire life anymore, what would you make it about? You don't think, oh, I chose this verse 44. That's a weird verse. No, the point is, is taking this subject matter about Jesus Christ. What else is there to preach on as the ultimate subject matter? What is it that if this were to be the last sermon I ever preached? If I were to fall down the pulpit steps and break my neck and never open my mouth again for the Lord, then the last thing that you would ever hear or anyone would hear me preach would be about Jesus Christ. The stone which the builders rejected, the one upon whom we must focus and lift up if we are to do what is right, not stumble against it, sort of almost by accident because of our blindness and difference, or seek to oppose ourselves to it and think we can win over the stone. Both of these sons in the parable were at fault, but one at least repented himself and went back and did originally as his father had asked.

But Jesus says to them, the publicans and the harvots, tax collectors, prostitutes, go into the kingdom of God before you, not because they're not sinners, they are sinners. We're all sinners, but they at least repented themselves. They understand their need for forgiveness. You guys don't seem to, Jesus was saying to them.

Psalms 78, we read, thinking about this parable, about the son who flattered his father and said, oh yes, I'll go. He says, that's what the Jewish leaders are like here. They're saying, yes, yes, of course we obey the Lord, of course we do.

[9 : 56] Yes, we profess it, we say it with our mouths, but they're flattering with their lips. Psalm 78 puts it this way, verse 36, You see, it's comparatively easy to say the right words. It takes longer and more commitment to actually put our lives into line with what we say. We can all say words, we can all say yes, yes, yes, Lord, of course I'll do this. Yes, of course I want to serve you. Of course I'm a Christian. Of course I try to do this. But let our service reflect it. Let our lives reflect it.

The Jewish leaders to whom Jesus is speaking recognized themselves in these parables that Jesus was teaching. They said to him, who gave you the authority? Who are you to tell us what to do? So

he gave them the example of John. He says, what was John in the wilderness?

Now, John was technically a priest. He was of priestly life. You go back to Luke chapter 1, you see who his parents were. Zacharias and Elizabeth, they were of the line of Abijah, of the priestly life. If John had turned up at the temple and said, come on, take my turn, give me a priestly garment and let me get washed and changed and I'll go and serve the incense or whatever, they'd have had to let him do it because his lineage could be proved.

He was of the house of Aaron. He was descended from Aaron. He had the right to be there, but instead he was out in the desert. And his impact was not that he was offering up sacrifices in the temple, which he would have a right to do.

[11:38] His impact was that he had a message from God, the Lord, that the nation, the people needed to repent and turn and prepare the way of the Lord. You see, like verse 29, afterward he repented and went.

And Jesus says, you know, the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and you believed him not. But the publicans and the harlots believed him.

And he, when he had seen it, repented not afterward that he might believe him. The fact that they were turning and repented made you guys think, oh no, we don't want to be like them. We don't want to be lumped in the same bracket with them.

John, where did his message come from? Jesus said, is it from heaven or from man? And they knew the answer. They knew that if John had any power at all and was coming from heaven, and everybody else recognized that.

But if they said that, then they had to give a reason for why he was still out there and they were still here. Not obeying, not changing, not doing anything. Because the fact of the matter was, to them, the Lord and his temple had simply become a comfortable means of livelihood.

[12:47] A money spinner, a racket, you might say. That's why they're annoyed. Not because Jesus is out in Galilee teaching people to love their enemies. It's because he's in the temple knocking over the tables of the money changers.

Business has been harmed. This guy is interfering with their way of life. So he's got to go. He's got to be overthrown. Jesus tells another parable.

There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, hedged it round about, dugged a winepress in it and built a tower, let it out to husbandmen and went into a foreign country. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might receive the fruits of it.

Now, two things Jesus is doing here. One, he is painting a picture with which they will all be familiar. The agricultural and political situation in Palestine in the first century was volatile.

They were well used to rich absentee landlords who got other people to work their land and pay them the rent. And they would send the servants, gather them the rent, and other people did the work.

[13:51] They were miles away. Absentee landlords, they knew all about that. They also knew about agricultural and political unrest. The idea of tenants deciding that they would just take over the vineyard for themselves and throw out the landlord's servants.

That was not unknown in Jesus' day. So he's describing a situation that they'll be well familiar with. He's talking to them about stuff they know.

And he's telling them a story in which they can instantly relate. And they've probably all known instances of it in Palestine. But he's going deeper than that. Because everybody would know that in picture terms, the vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel.

And this we would have going back to Isaiah 5, a famous illustration there. We'll just read the verses 1 to 7 there. But it says, Now I will sing to my well-beloved, a song of my beloved touching his vineyard.

My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it and gathered out the stones thereof and planted it with the choicest vine and built a tower in the midst of it and also made a winepress therein.

[15:03] And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard, what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?

Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes. And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. But I will take away the hedgerow, and it shall be eaten up and break down the wall that I have, and it shall be trodden down.

And I will lay it waste, it shall not be pruned or digged. There shall come up briars and thorns. I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant.

And he looked for judgment, but behold, oppression. For righteousness, but behold, a cry. Now Israel understood themselves in this parable, in that illustration of Isaiah, because it was spelled out.

The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant. When Jesus starts to tell this story, this parable of the vineyard, it's not just, oh yeah, this is a situation we're familiar with right about.

[16:20] This is current political agricultural unrest. We know about this. This is also painting a picture of the house of Israel. This is the reality of Israel's relationship with God.

And all that Jesus is saying here is, you know, if the fruit isn't rendered as it ought to be, then God will take away that vineyard, or he will take away the tenants, destroy the tenants, and he'll put new ones in that will render the fruitfulness to them.

This is what he says. You know, that the vineyard will be taken away, and given unto other husband men. This is the heir, come, let us kill him.

What will he do to those husbands? He'll take them away. The stone which the builders rejected, the same has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing. It's marvelous in our eyes.

The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, given to a nation, bringing forth a fruit.

Now that doesn't cause us then to make, oh well, the bad Jews, but the good Gentiles, we're Gentiles, so that makes us good. We're okay. A nation is people.

[17:27] It is not a state. You can't say, oh, the state of Israel, the nation of Israel, but the nation of Scotland, the state of Scotland, we're much better. No, we're not. Nation is people.

That's why in the United States, for example, when they think about the Indian nations, they still don't, let's say, the Sioux Nation, or the Cheyenne Nation, or the Seminole Nation, because these are the particular Indian tribes, American Indian tribes there, within the political unit of the United States.

The nation is people. It's not the same as a state with boundaries and borders and a government and official. The nation means people. The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people, a nation, bringing forth the fruits that are off.

And so this application of people, that applies regardless across the board. Whether we are Scottish, or English, or Irish, or Jewish, or American, or German, or Dutch, or Indian, or whatever it may be, if the kingdom of God does not bring forth fruitfulness amongst us, it will be taken away and given to those that will.

And it doesn't mean, oh, collectively, it will be individually and collectively. We lose it as a community, we lose it as islands, we lose it as a country, but we lose it as individuals as well if we will not render the fruitfulness to the Lord.

[18:52] What should one's final, or ultimate, ever, if you only had one speech, one sermon read to do, what should it be about? It should be about Jesus Christ.

Because this is the one thing that we must each recognize and focus upon. This is the stone that you cannot afford to stumble against.

It is the stone that you cannot afford to have fall upon you. Now, Jesus, when he talks about himself as the capstone, the cornerstone, what is it, the head of the corner, what would be the right response to say?

It would be to lift it up and put it in the right place. That is what would be the right response for us.

Now, Jesus talks in John's account of the Gospel about himself being lifted up.

He does it several times. But every time that he does so, you'll notice the connotation of connection in which he speaks about it. John 3, verses 14 and 15, we read, As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

[20:05] And again, in chapter 8, of John's account of the Gospel, and verse 28, we read, Then said Jesus unto them, when ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

And again, chapter 12 of John, and we read in verse 31, Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out, and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

This, he said, signifying what death he should die. Now he was talking about lifting up the serpent in the wilderness. The serpent was lifted up on a pole, possibly a cross beam, so that the children of Israel could look on the brazen serpent, and when they looked at it, they would be healed of their plague.

And likewise, what he says, now if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me. When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, he is talking about being raised up on the cross.

When Jesus talks about being lifted up, he is talking about his death. This, he said, signifying what death he should die. And the people recognize that he's talking about a death, but they will not see that it is about him.

[21 : 27] The people answer, we have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever. How saith thou the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is the Son of Man? Now when they say that we've heard that the Messiah must last forever, they're thinking about the likes of, say, Daniel, chapter 7.

We read verses 13 and 14. I saw in the night visions. Behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven and came to the ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom that all people, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Psalms 110 tells us verse 4 that the Lord hath reached forever after the order of Melchizedek. So the people knew these verses applied to the Messiah. Well, when He comes, He's going to last forever. So you're talking about people being lifted up and crucified and dying. So who is the Son of Man you're talking about? Jesus hadn't said the Son of Man will be lifted up. He said, I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

[22 : 37] He's spelling it out. And they're still saying, well, who is it you're talking about? He said, I, if I be lifted up. Well, just a minute, who is the Son of Man who's got to, Messiah's got to abide forever.

They're walking along about to stumble over this stone. It's right there in front of them. He is telling them, it's me, I. It's connected with my death. And still they will not see.

Still they will fall and stumble against that stone and be broken. You see, the right response to Jesus, to have him lifted up as the stone in the head of the corner of what it ought to be, is inescapably and inextricably bound up with this death.

Nobody who recognizes the truth of Christ Jesus, nobody who knows him for who he is and loves him for who he is can do so apart from his death.

Now sometimes people try to do that. They say, oh yes, of course we honour Jesus and of course we honour for his teaching and his healing and we love the fact that he loved the little children and he raised Lazarus from the dead and oh, what about the death?

[23 : 46] Oh, that was just a tragedy. We don't want to think about that. That was just awful. We're not quite sure how a loving God could have allowed that, but you know, we don't like to think about it. How can you not think about it?

How can it not be central to you when it was so central to Jesus? I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will bear all men unto me.

All those who will trust in me will be able to do so because of my death upon the cross. My paying the price for sin. Oh, we've heard out of the law that the Son of Man Christ abides forever.

How sayest thou the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is the Son of Man? This he had said signifying what death he should die. If the stone be lifted up and put in its right place, it will be through his death that our life is secured.

We cannot have and know Christ as he ought to be known and loved and served apart from his death. Yes, he will destroy his enemies.

[24 : 50] When he falls upon them, he will grind them to powder. This is also thinking in the stone theme like in Daniel in chapter 2 and verses 34, 35.

And saw us till there is stone was cut out without hands which smote the image, the image of the gold head and the silver chest and the bronze thighs and the clay and iron feet.

All the empires and nations of the world had smashed against them, broken to pieces together and became like the chaff of the summer fleshing floor and the wind carried them away but no place was found for them and the stone that smokes the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

This is Christ. His kingdom will not only fill the whole earth but which will never fall away. This world will pass away but his kingdom will never pass away.

This is the Christ, the stone that the builders reject. Are we rejecting him too? Jesus criticizes the people of his generation because he thinks, well, if you think I'm too normal because I came eating and drinking and mixing with harlots and publicans and so on, what about John?

[26 : 02] He was the wild man in the desert. He never ate anything sacrificed to idols. He never failed to wash before meals. He never ate the wrong stuff. He never mixed with the harlots and publicans except when they came to repent.

He was as pure as could be. He was out there in the desert. He was untainted by the world. You couldn't fault John. Why didn't you listen to John? Rather than, if you don't want to listen to me, was John's baptism from heaven or from heaven?

Well, we don't like to say they knew it was from heaven. If you wouldn't accept Jesus, fine, accept John. But they wouldn't accept John and they wouldn't accept Jesus because they knew they were both from heaven.

Jesus criticized his generation. He said, you know, you like children sitting in the marketplaces calling to the hell and saying, we have piped to you and you have not danced. We have mourned to you and you have not lamented.

For John came neither eating or drinking and they say, he hath a devil. The son of man came eating and drinking and they say, behold, a man who loved this and a winder, a friend of publicans and sinners that wisdom is justified if we're children.

[27 : 06] And Jesus comes to us as this stone which the builders reject. Are we too rejecting him? Are we too turning against him?

And I think, oh, well, if only it was easier to think about Jesus that way. If only it was easier to recognize him for who he is. Okay, how is it you would like Jesus to be? If you want him to be a powerful king that drives all before him, well, that's what he's going to be when he comes in the clouds of glory, when he comes with all his heavenly hosts.

We read of that in Scripture. We read of it in Thessalonians. We read of it in Revelation. And we also read that when he comes, the tribes of the earth shall mourn.

This is what he himself says in chapter 24 of Matthew, verse 30. Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

If you want that kind of Christ, that's how he is. power and greatness and glory but so many in the world will not. Even in Revelation where he comes finally in glory, we read in chapter 1 that when he comes, he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him and they also which pierced him and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him because they will realize too late.

[28 : 28] This was the stone that was there all the time. It was near at hand all the time. It was powerful and hard and strong and able to shelter us all the time and we rejected it.

It was near at hand. It was easy to be entreated. If you don't want the powerful Jesus coming in the clouds of glory to judge his enemies or you can't think about it yet, think about the gentler Jesus who invites little children into his arms and he put his hands there and blessed them and folded them in his arms.

Think about the Jesus who falls asleep in the back of the boat showing his own human weakness in that sense. Think of the Jesus that women flocked to and yet there was nothing unclean or impure in his treatment of them but rather he treated them as people with dignity rather than as objects to be abused or bought and sold.

What made people expend their one precious item and fill a house with perfume and wipe his feet with their hair? What made children and women and publicans and tax collectors recognize that in this man was somebody who would see them for who they were and recognized them and still love them and there would still be a place of forgiveness for them?

What kind of Jesus is it that would bring you, that would draw you, that you would have? What is it that you are missing? Oh well, they're all just a bit too, a wee bit too threatening for me in my lifestyle and I don't want to be challenged or threatened where I am.

[30 : 09] What could be threatening about such a Jesus? Okay, let's go to the least threatening of all. Let's go to how he comes.

Let's think of an infant of a day old. Think of the Jesus in the arms of his mother Mary. Think of him being laid in a manger, in a trough with straw and the animals round about.

You can't get more humble and gentle and weak. There is nothing threatening in a baby. There is nothing overpowering or threatening or military might wise or going to undermine your strength in this baby.

this is how Jesus comes to us at the first. If this is what it takes to cause mankind to recognize to come to finally bow the knee of the Son of God however he has come and by whatever means he comes and however he reveals himself still there will be those who will turn away.

There will be those who will want nothing to do with the baby in arms. Nothing to do with the child of Nazareth. Nothing to do with the gentle soul who invites children to be embraced in his arms who forgives the sinners who washes away the tears of those who are broken hearted who raises the dead who heals and cleanses the lepers.

[31 : 43] If none of these manifestations of Jesus will still touch our hearts what will? Well actually nothing really so I mean you just do what you've got to do and I've got my life here.

Well I don't know whether you consider this good news or bad news but one way or another you and I will each encounter Jesus one day.

One day we will come face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ. One day we will see him as he is and we will either do so as his children as his servants who love him who long to see him who rejoice at the sight of their risen and glorified saviour or we will be as those who wail of whom we read in Revelation but we will see him and you will encounter Christ.

You see there is nobody in this parable that Jesus tells who doesn't come into contact with the stone.

Either there is the builders who reject it or there is those who trip and fall against it and are broken because of their indifference or there are those who having rejected and opposed them leave themselves nothing but for his judgment to fall upon them.

[33 : 09] And that is the last encounter that some shall have with Jesus. The stone which will fall and when it does we read it will grind them to powder.

There will be nothing left but to feel the full weight of the judgment and wrath of this judge of all the earth.

We are taught again and again in scripture we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The stone which the builders rejected. Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken our indifference our idleness our casual unbelief but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind them to powder but there is nobody who does not come into contact contact with the stone one way or another.

You fall on it or it falls on you or you lift it up and place it where it ought to be. It is lifted up through his death upon the cross he is lifted up through his death upon the cross everything in the building fitly joins together.

[34 : 32] Through his death upon the cross we are washed and cleansed of our sin through his death upon the cross we have life in all its fullness if he be lifted up he will draw men unto himself but if he be left lying up on the ground you will either trip and fall on that stone will be broken or it will fall at the last upon you.

Solemn and sorrowful and fearful as it may be this is the truth there will be none who do not encounter Jesus one way or another at the first or at the last he is the Alpha he is the Omega and one way or another you will encounter Christ let it be soon rather than later let it be in mercy rather than in judgment let it be in the gentleness and the frailty of the little child of Bethlehem or in the loving Messiah of Nazareth who welcomes the little children or in the heartfelt kindness that would cleanse the leper or heal the harlots and the prostitutes of their sin or will say to the publicans and to the Pharisees alike your sins can be forgiven what's the and the and the as the center and soul of the living temple in which the Lord invites you to be likewise built into it one day one way or another you will encounter

Christ Jesus this is who it is all about it is whom the scripture is all about it is whom all of God's creation and providence and revolution of himself is all about it is for the sake of Jesus Christ and his glory that he has done all that he has done there is nobody that you have more need of to

encounter now whilst yet there is time whilst yet there is mercy if there is but one message to give
this is who it is this is who it is all about Christ nothing comes to Lord it is music ■■ its out and
|