

“Rocks And Stones”

January 20, 2019

Isaiah 8:7-17

Would you open your Bible with me to the second Book of the Bible, the Book of Exodus at chapter seventeen? And please follow with me from verse one. Exodus 17:1 *“And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. (2) Wherefore the people did chide (quarrel) with Moses, and said, give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, why chide ye with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?”*

(3) And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

(4) And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, what shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me. (5) And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. (6) Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.”

Today “Stones And Rocks.” Most of us don’t find rocks very exciting. But I know why. Rocks are boring. They just sit there and almost have no purpose; at least to many of us. But, if you’d been a Jew and you, your family, your livestock, and all of your neighbor had no water. And on the day you and your family had nothing to drink saw a man hit a rock with a stick and suddenly a flood of water was gushing out of that rock, you’d think twice the next time you saw that rock.

Can you think of the last time your water was shut off by the water company?

So, yes, rocks and stones are somewhat boring water burst out of one and became a flowing river.

And it’s likely that some of the Bible is just history for you. But, two things as I begin today. First, the Bible is much more than history. Second, even the rock right here in Exodus points your heart to the Person of Jesus Christ.

I’ve titled today’s message “Rocks And Stones.” Shall we pray?

Now turn with me to the New Testament Book of I Peter and find with me chapter two.

Someone has wisely said “The old thoughts are often the best thoughts.” By that I mean this. The Bible is the oldest best book ever written. And in both the Old and the New Testaments, God compares Himself, not to rocks, but to Rock; even Stone.

Can you go back with me mentally, for just a moment to the story of a barren woman named Hannah? Her story forms the early chapters of First Samuel. Do you remember that she was barren? And do you remember the woman Peninnah mocking her because, quote *“the LORD has shut her womb”*? You remember that. But, do you remember the Rock? Do you remember that Hannah prayed; that she submitted herself to God, and, if God permitted, was willing to surrender her child to the LORD?

Well, the barren Hannah bore a son. God answered those prayers she had prayed for a child. She named him Samuel. And Samuel became one of the mightiest of the LORD’s prophets.

Now, here’s why I wanted to review Hannah’s story with you. What name did she recite when she prayed *after* her son Samuel has been born? The name was Jehovah Tsari.

Here’s what the Bible says. I Samuel 2:1 *“And Hannah prayed, and said, my heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice*

in thy salvation. (2) There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God."

This word "Tsari" is one of the Hebrew names for God. In English it means "the LORD our Rock." God had done impossible for a barren women just as He had done something impossible for the Jews who had no water in the wilderness. And by what name does Hannah refer to her LORD? I Samuel 2:2 *"There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God."*

So, you've got Moses. You've got Hannah. And how about David? Do you remember David speaking about the LORD after his miraculous deliverance out of the hand of King Saul? In II Samuel 22:2 he prays this way. *"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; (3) The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my Saviour; thou savest me from violence. (4) I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies."*

You see, the old thoughts are often the best thoughts. And the Bible tells us exactly what God is. He's the Rock that gushes forth water. He's the Same Rock that fills the barren womb of a prayer wife. And He's the Same Rock that rescued a shepherd soldier from an angry king.

Now, it may be a long time since you saw the LORD as your Rock or you may never have seen Him as the Bible presents Him, "your Rock." So, today, who is this Rock?

Let me say a word about rock and then I want to show you what "the stone," Peter, whose name means "stone," says about the Rock Christ Jesus.

Everywhere you go, you find stones. I you're in the construction business, you know something about stones. Your concrete sidewalk is filled with a lot of stone. Chalk comes from a stone? The graphite in your pencil comes from stone. And silicon, that material used in your computer and

in your phone? Stone? Silicon means "hard stone." Silicon is so amazing that it can be sliced into wafers down to one millionth of one millimeter and then placed into your computer, your phone, your television, your car and every single appliance in your house. Today we call them silicon chips. But it's just a type of stone.

On my first trip to the Kingdom of Lesotho when our Bible Institute in operation, I noticed a lot of stones on the ground; all sorts of them; thousands of these small, beautiful, sparkling stones. It was easy to pick them up by the handfuls. On my first trip I brought home two hundred pounds of those beautiful stones. On my last trip I found up a beautiful agate; brought it home, had it cut, had it polished, and set into two rings; one for Janet and one for myself. And, just one year ago, on January 18, 2018, a 910 carat diamond was mined in Lesotho; worth upwards to fifty million dollars; the largest diamond ever found in Lesotho.

So, you might not think much about stones. But, they are very important to some people. So, when the Bible speaks about them, we need to look at them carefully; especially when God compares Himself to a Rock.

Every word in the Bible has been placed there by the Holy Spirit. Every topic in the Bible; chosen by the LORD. Every page should be seen as though God wrote every letter of every word on that page. And all the passages in the Bible are designed to help you see Him; to help you understand and know Him.

So, stones and rocks. Are they important? What can they teach the heart of those who want to know the LORD better?

Please find with me the fourth verse of this second chapter of I Peter. Now, as I read, see if you can understand, not only how God views stones; but see also how important they are. And I want you to note something else as we read.

You'll see that Peter quotes from three Old Testament passages to make his point; verse four. 1 Peter 2:4 "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed [rejected] indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, (5) Ye also, as lively [living] stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

(6) Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture (Isaiah 28:16), Behold, I lay in Sion [in Jerusalem] a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded (which means "put to shame").

(7) Unto you therefore which believe, he [Jesus] is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, (from Psalm 119:22) the stone which the builders disallowed (rejected), the same is made the head of the corner, (8) and (another quotation from Isaiah 8:14) a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."

Did you get the impression of the writer? Did you get his message? Do you see how important rocks and stones are?

Peter says that we who believe on Christ have come to a Living Stone; the same One Who's been rejected by men, but *The One Chosen by God* and *The One Who is Precious*.

Who here thinks of Jesus as a Living Stone? It's quite striking to think that Jesus Christ can compare Himself to a Living Stone, isn't it?

What does it mean? He, the Invisible Rock, is unmistakably stronger and much more solid than anything you see with your eyes or you stand on with your feet. He's the One Who *has* life and He's the One Who *gives* life. He's the Living Stone that you came to when you trusted Him for your salvation. According to the Bible, He's the Rock of your salvation.

Psalm 62:1 "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. (2) He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved. (6) He only is my rock and my

salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. (7) In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God."

Whatever you've always thought of God, would you please revise your thinking and begin to think from the viewpoint of the Bible?

And Peter adds this; verse six. Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone. And, verse seven, He's the Stone rejected by the builders. And verse eight, Jesus is even counted as a Stumbling Stone, and a Rock of Offence.

And, did you notice that three times in this short paragraph the Father refers to His Son, this same stone, Jesus, as Precious, Precious, Precious; in verse four, in verse six, and in verse seven. Precious, "the one that is the highest in value;" "the One Most Distinguished" and certainly "the One most dearly prized of all."

So, from the Old Testament to the New Testament to today, The LORD, "Jehovah Tsari," the LORD is our Rock. Interestingly, in the LXX, the Hebrew word "Tsur" is translated into Greek twenty times as "God" [according to Staffan Olofsson in "God Is My Rock: A Study of Translation Technique And Theological Exegesis in the Septuagint"].

This past week, when you were faced with a large test of your faith; did you turn your attention to Jehovah Tsari? Are you in need today? Then, who is it that you are finding the most dependable Person in your life? Will you today see the One Stone that stands out as the Highest and Greatest Stone in all 39 Books of the Old Testament?

Now, how does it help to understand the LORD as your Rock, as your Living Stone, Precious, Chosen by God, and so forth?

Stones, as you know, have always been used for things like walls and buildings and for altars. And weren't there the

twelve stones retrieved from the dry river bed after the LORD stopped the Jordan River from flowing so the Jews could enter the Holy Land? By the way, these became stones of remembrance. And, of course, you have memorial stones like the one you placed at the head of a deceased family member or friend who has been buried in the ground.

So, first, is your God a Living Rock; Invisible and unmistakably more solid than anything and anyone; One that *has* life and *gives* life; verse four. I Peter 2:4 *"To whom coming, as unto a living stone ..."*

Listen with me to how Moses described Him in Genesis 49:24. *"The Mighty God of Jacob is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel."*

Moses describes Him again in Deuteronomy 32:15 as "the Rock of" our "salvation." And again in Deuteronomy 32:18, He's even "The Rock that" gave us birth.

You read in the Bible about a fish swallowing a man and that man being spit out onto land and commanded to preach God's Word to people in the city of Nineveh. You read in the Bible about Moses coming into contact with a bush that was burned, yet, not burned up. You read about the walls of Jericho coming down when the Jews shouted. You read about the Red Sea parting and two million people crossing over. Now, when was the last time you heard about a Living Rock; a Living Stone?

The Bible always presents reality; even those things we can't fully comprehend. No, we can't see the LORD as our Rock, but that's because we, like those Disciples on the Road to Emmaus, slow of heart to believe. But the purpose of word pictures is to help us to see the LORD for Who He really is.

So, let me show you what this means. Turn back with me to I Corinthians chapter ten. And find with me the first verse. I Corinthians 10:1 *"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and*

all passed through the [Red] sea; (2) And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; (3) And did all eat the same spiritual meat [food]; (4) And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

Even when they didn't quote "see" the LORD, He was there. He was Invisible then and He was present then. And it's no different today. He's still invisible and He's still present. And He's still the Rock.

Now, what does your Bible teach about that Rock, the One from from those days when the Jews journeyed for forty years in the wilderness? Your Bible teaches us that the Jesus Himself was right there with them. When they trusted in the Him; when they leaned on Him for their livelihood; when they listened to His voice speaking through Moses; they were drinking living water from the Living Rock, Jesus Himself. He was and still is our Spiritual Rock. Paul says *"they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ [Messiah]."*

You see, that Spiritual Rock followed them those forty years in the desert, was not some spiritual force that kept them on track. Rather, it was a Person; their Living Rock, the LORD Jesus, providing for them every step of the way; caring for their every need both physical and spiritual.

Some of you here today might be missing out on your Every-present Rock. But, He's the One Who follows you everywhere you go. And each time you have a need; each time you go to Him; He supplies it, He's *your* Spiritual Rock. Like David could say "The LORD is my Shepherd," you can say "The LORD is my Rock" invisible, yet, ever present and supplying every need.

Rocks are everywhere and we usually take them for granted. The LORD, our Rock, is everywhere and we usually take Him for granted, don't we?

Now, I realize this is not a perfect illustration. But, you all know what molten lava is, right. It's that very, very, very hot material one hundred twenty-seven miles inside of the earth's mantle. Molten lava is extremely hot, always moving, and constantly flowing. When it's inside the earth, it's called magma. And when it is spewn or spit out of a volcano, it's called lava. Now, when that lava is spewn out of a volcano, it flows everywhere. And it hardens to become a very durable, solid, rock. And, over time, when that rock disintegrates. And, as it disintegrates, it becomes soil. And that soil becomes the means for all living things to grow. So, in one sense, you are constantly eating disintegrated rocks.

You see, the Bible tells us that God is a Living Rock.

Now, remember I said that the old thoughts are often the best thoughts. The old thought is that God is a Rock; not some small throwing rock; but a huge, a large, a massive rock structure. In other words, a foundation; Someone you build your life on. You can believe every single thing He says. He's totally reliable. You can stand on this Rock. You can build your life on this Invisible, absolutely solid Foundation. Paul preached it like this. I Corinthians 3:11 *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."*

When Jesus concluded His famous "Sermon on The Mount," He ended with a story, the story of the two builders. One, He said, had built his life on a foundation of sand; and one on a solid, rock solid, reliable foundation. Then, something we all know about, when the storms of life arrive, the one who'd been building on the sandy foundation was completely shaken and then destroyed. But the one who had built his life on obedience to the words of Jesus, lasted and succeeded.

Here's Luke 6:48 *"He is like a man which built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake*

it: for it was founded upon a rock. (49) But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

Jesus goes on to say *"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: ..."* (Matthew 7:24).

Are you among the wise; those who hear the words of Jesus and do them? You see, as the Living Rock, God is God alone. He is present. He's awesome in His presence. He's your Protector; a Shelter in the time of storm. He's durable, reliable, faithful, unfailing, permanent. You can totally depend on this Reliable Rock, the LORD Jesus Christ, as the Foundation for your life.

Please take a moment and find with me a hymn. It's Hymn # 526. It was written by 18th century London Pastor Edward Mote. In his testimony Mr. Mote tells about his parents managing a pub and letting him run the streets to the degree that, he says "So ignorant was I that I did not know that there was a God." While a teenager, someone brought him the Gospel. He repented and put his trust in the Rock. Here's his testimony.

1. My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus Christ, my righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

Chorus - On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

2. When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.

3. His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.

Chorus - On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

4. When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
In Him, my righteousness, alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.

Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVE-xXFD0wg>

As the Solid Rock, Jesus is the One you need to utterly depend upon. He's solid; He's durable; He's reliable; He's faithful and He's the Strong One and He's a Shelter for protection.

Folks, you might not be able to explain how the Red Sea could dry up. You might not be able to explain how Moses could see a burning bush and the bush not be consumed from the fire. But the one Book that tells us what is real is the Bible. And, if the Bible tells us that the Living Rock, Jesus Christ, then He is the Living Rock. And He is still today inviting people to come to Him and receive the Water of Life. So, is He the Living Rock to you? If not, there is no one else in this entire world that can bring you spiritual life. No one anywhere can forgive you of your immorality, your lies, your adultery, your murder by your words. No one, except the Living Rock, the LORD Jesus Christ. He's exactly Who the Bible says He is.

God presents Himself to us as a Living Rock because we need a True Foundation. And that True Foundation is the LORD Himself. Only He can truly satisfy our souls. He is the Only One worthy of building your life on.

First, God compares Himself to a Solid, Living Rock; one that has life and gives life.

Second, the Jews rejected Him. Find again this fourth verse with me. Peter makes it plain and simple I Peter 2:4 "*To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed [rejected] indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious ...*" And verse six. I Peter 2:6 "*Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture (Isaiah 28:16), Behold, I lay in Sion [in Jerusalem] a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded (which means "put to shame"). (7) Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, (from Psalm 119:22) the stone which the builders disallowed (rejected), the same is made the head of the corner...*"

He came unto His own and His own received Him not. And, because they rejected Him, the Bible refers to Jesus as the Stumbling stone and the Rock of Offence.

There are only two responses to what Peter says about Jesus being the Living Rock. You either believe on Him or you reject Him. He becomes either a Solid Rock for you or He becomes a Stumbling Stone and a Rock of Offence.

Folks, there are people all over the world who are hearing the message of Life that salvation is found in no one except the LORD Jesus. And there are more opportunities to be saved here in America than in any place in the entire world. But, because of our materialism and our religiousness, and because of our pride, multitudes of Americans will likely go to Hell.

And, of all the ones who have been given the opportunity to receive Christ, none have rejected Christ more than the religious community.

Look again with me at this seventh verse. I Peter 2:7 "*Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, (from Psalm 119:22) the stone which the builders disallowed (rejected), the same is made the head of the corner...*"

Some believe and some reject. You see this word “disallowed” in verse seven? It means “rejected.” One of the saddest truths in the Bible is the truth that the Jews have rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Peter says “some believe” and “some reject.”

That’s Peter. Now, last, go with me to Paul. How does Paul present Jesus, the Rock. Look with me at Romans chapter nine and verse thirty. Romans 9:30 *“What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. (31) But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.*

(32) Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; (33) as it is written (in Isaiah 8:14), Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

The difference between the Jews and Gentiles in regards to salvation and being righteous in God’s eyes is right here in these few verses. The Gentiles, many, many of them, have exercised faith in the Person and work of the Jewish Messiah. But, the Jews, who have tried for centuries to create their own righteousness by their good works, have not found righteousness before God.

And Paul’s message is the exact same one as Peter’s. Paul even uses the very same Old Testament Scriptures to say it; verse thirty-three again.

Romans 9:33 *“as it is written (in Isaiah 8:14), Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”*

Can you remember the last time you tripped over a rock in your path? That’s the picture of what it looks like when people hear about Jesus Christ, learn about Jesus Christ, hear what Christians have said of Him; and then reject Him. The

same stone that you step onto to support you and move you forward is the exact same rock that the Jews have stumbled over for centuries. A stumbling block is simply a stone in your pathway.

To the Jews, Jesus is an offense; a Rock of Offence. To the Believers, both Jews and Gentiles, Jesus is the Living Rock, the Foundation for their lives. But to the unbelieving Jews Jesus is a Rock of Offence. Still today many are so offended if you bring up the name of Jesus. One Jewish lady told me how offended she was with a bumper sticker that goes like this “My Boss is a Jewish Carpenter.” He’s a Stumbling block to many.

But, consider just Who Jesus is. “He was a Jew. He was a child of Jewish parents, brought up in a Jewish home and reared among Jewish traditions. Throughout his life, Jesus lived among Jews and his followers were Jews.

No other Jew in history has come close to Jesus in his influence. Jesus, the Jew, has been, and continues to affect the lives of millions of. Jesus is the Lord Christ, God Incarnate, the very Son of God the Father. And Jesus was such a Perfect Jew that no one can compare to His Jewish life. And He claimed to be the Jewish Messiah and fulfill the predictions for the Old Testament. And for Jesus to claim to be the Messiah, if it was an extreme offence and the Jews said He was committing blasphemy.

Jesus lived, not a Christian life, but as a Jewish life, obedient to Torah. Yet within a few years after his death, the Jewish followers of Jesus espoused a totally different lifestyle from Judaism, which today is still based upon the Law, whereas Christianity is simple faith in Christ’s finished work.

Add to that that many Christians over the centuries have persecuted the Jews because, as some have said, the Jews killed Jesus; even though He was crucified by Romans soldiers and put a sign over his head to mock him that said

“King of the Jews.” So, because Jesus is a Stumbling block to the Jew, He’s not even worth thinking about.

Then, add to that that many Jews have become Believers in Yeshua. And many of them observe the teachings of Moses and follow what Moses taught. They count themselves as Jewish Christians.

Jesus was a Jew, was born, lived and died a Jew. And for that the Jews throughout the centuries are offended at Him. Many are still offended today. They still stumble over Him. [Adapted from “Jesus, the Jew” by Edward Kessler and found on <http://www.bbc.co.uk>].

Jesus is the Living Rock and every day people around the world are deciding for or against Jesus. Some will depend upon Him; some will not. And those who depend upon Him are not ashamed of Him. Are you depending upon Him for eternal life? And are you depending upon Him as your Rock for every day of your life? Is He your Living, Solid Rock? Or, is He an Offence to you and a Stumbling stone? There are only two choices. And it’s up to you to reject Him or to believe on Him.

Why not choose Him today? Repent, change your mind and trust in the Solid Rock and find He’s the Living Rock, the One with Life and the One Who gives life.

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 116 “Name of All Majesty”