

CHRIST THE CORNERSTONE, 8 pgs

*When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, **Where is he that is born King of the Jews?** for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him, **Mt.2:2** .*

Jesus Christ was supposedly born to be the King of the Jews. The wise men from the east were awaiting his birth. They probably gleaned this from the writings of Daniel, though Jesus was never accepted by the Jewish nation as their king. The chief priests and officers were threatened by Jesus and wanted him dead, **Jn.19:6**. When Pilot presented Jesus to the Jews they cried out for him to be crucified, **v.14-15**. *Shall I crucify **your king**? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar, **v.15** .* Later, they were angry with Pilot for the words he placed at the top of the cross: **JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS**. *This title was then read by many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin [similar to a Rosetta Stone] . The the chief priests of the Jews objected, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that **he claimed** to be King of the Jews, **Jn.19:19-21**. Pilot refused that request, **v.22**. Was he not destined to become king of the Jews? Yes, king over heaven and all the earth ... but that requires some explanation.*

The Miracle of his Incarnation

The well-known words of the angel to Mary are profoundly prophetic ... *thou shalt ... bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the **Son of the Highest**: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And **he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever**; and of his kingdom there shall be no end , **Lk.1:30-33** .*

The Kingdom of God in the Past – the ‘throne of David’

To understand the prophecy of the angel an understanding of the Old Testament is necessary. **God’s kingdom was in fact the ancient Kingdom of Israel.** We can see this from the following passages of scripture: **The nation of Israel was God’s “kingdom” and he was their “king” allowing them to inhabit “His land” – the land of Israel, Isa.43:15, 44:6; Ex.19:5-6; Ps.114:1-2; Ez.36:5. Israel eventually wanted a man to be their king, 1 Sam.8:7. These kings were only ruling on behalf of God, 2 Chron.9:8. In king David’s words: the LORD ... hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel, 1 Chron 28:5 . David and his son Solomon were therefore rulers of the ‘Kingdom of God’ in the past.**

The Kingdom of God Temporally Overturned

In **Ezekiel** we read a prophecy against the last of the line of the Kings of this Kingdom. This is what God said to king **Zedekiah** ... *and thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, **until he come whose right it is**; and I will give it to him, **Ez.21: 25-27**. **So the Kingdom of God was to be overturned for a limited time until he comes whose right it is.** There was then to be a ‘coming one’ who will have the ‘kingdom’ given to*

him – the Kingdom that King David of old governed. **There are plenty of prophecies in the OT about the future revival of this past Kingdom.**

*When oppression and destruction have ended and enemy raiders have disappeared, then **God will establish one of David's descendants as king.** He will rule with mercy and truth. He will always do what is just and be eager to do what is right, **Isa.16:4-5** .*

*In that day **will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen**, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old, **Amos 9:11.***

*And **the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land** , and shall choose Jerusalem again, **Zech.2:12** .*

The message to Mary unlocked

With that OT background we can revisit and better understand that message from the angel to Mary. Remember **it was said of her child that** ... *the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, **Lk.1:32** .* This was the ancient throne of the Kingdom of Israel that was overthrown as we saw in **Ez.21:27**. The throne that David of old sat on governed a literal territory on earth. That throne is to be given to Jesus Christ [not Solomon] and when it is given to him **it will last forever**. This was indeed promised to King David.

*... I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever ... And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before me ... **2 Sam.7:12-17** .*

So this future descendant would reign forever [be an immortal ruler over an eternal kingdom]. The NT opens with words that hint at this: *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, **the son of David** , the son of Abraham, **Mt.1:1**.* Jesus was David's descendant and therefore heir to the throne of the Kingdom of God in the past. We read **in the angel's message to Mary** ... *he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, **Lk.1:33** .* This links in with the promise to David. The "house of Jacob" refers to the descendants of Jacob whose name was changed to "Israel" and he became the father of the Jewish nation. **So this king will specifically be the "King of the Jews" and rule over the ancient physical Kingdom of Israel** as King David of old did.

When did Christ become King?

Jesus had not yet restored the Kingdom to Israel when the apostles asked him this question after his death and resurrection ... *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? **Acts 1:6** .* **It was their earnest expectation that the Kingdom of Israel would once again be restored with Jesus as King.** However 'then was not the time' for Jesus replies: *It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power, **Acts 1:7**.*

The return of Christ to establish Gods Kingdom

The great message of the OT is that the seed of David [Jesus] would reestablish the Kingdom of Israel. This was how they understood the promise of the angels to those who saw Jesus go to heaven.

... while [the apostles] looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said ... This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven, **Acts 1:10-11**.

So Jesus was to return to restore this Kingdom which will eventually grow and take over the whole earth, **Dan.2**. This Kingdom will be like the Kingdom of God in the past, it will have a righteous King (Christ) a Capital city (Jerusalem or Zion), a law etc. and **it's influence will grow until all nations have come into subjection to it**.

The promises of Israel's restoration are fulfilled in the New Covenant Church

However, that language was Old Covenant terminology couched in the OT. In my essay, *THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IS OUR ROSETTA STONE*, I pointed out that God's intention has always been to bring people from all nations into his kingdom and that the promises and prophecies have been adapted by the Gospel to that end. So they weren't changed, **they were fulfilled in the church under the New Covenant**.

He made you [Gentiles] alive, you who were once dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of this world, **Eph.2:1-2**. You Gentiles in the flesh who were called uncircumcised, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise ... without God ... afar off have been brought near, **v.11-13**. But then, we **all** [Jews and Gentiles] were dead (**v.5**) and conducted ourselves that way, **v.3**. **God loved us all** (**v.4**) and made us **all** alive ... raised us all up together ... **v.5-6**. He has made both one, a single new man from the two of us, **v.14-17**. He preached peace to you who were far off [Gentiles] and to those who were near [Jews] (**v.17**) to give us both the same access to the Father by His Spirit, **v.18**.

CHRIST REIGNS AS KING TODAY

The good news is that the Kingdom of God has come in the person of Jesus Christ its heir. God promised David that He would establish his Kingdom and that his heir [not Solomon] would rule forever. **Lk.1:31-38** announced the Kingdom in the terms of **Isa.9:1-7**. The message of the Gospels is that the Kingdom of heaven is at hand [ie, very close to beginning] because the king is here, **Mt.4:17**; **Mk.1:14-15**. Matthew especially goes to great lengths to connect everything Jesus does to the prophecies in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, and others. There are numerous OT passages describing the coming of Messiah. The preaching and healing of Jesus climaxes after approximately three years with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (**Mt.21**) setting events in motion for his crucifixion and resurrection.

Some Pharisees objected to the proclamation by His disciples that Jesus' status was that of a king. Jesus replied, *if these [disciples] were silent, the very stones would cry out*, **Lk.19:37-40**. The prestigious religious people did not generally accept Him, but the poor, prostitutes, thieves, and people with every appearance of ungodliness (sinners), many of whom weren't even allowed in the synagogue, accepted Him. Jesus commented on this via the parable of the two sons, **Mt.21:28-32**. What response is an appropriate welcome for this king? *Repent [Change your minds] and believe Him*, **v.32**.

Jesus follows the parable of the two sons with the parable of the wicked vineyard tenants (**Mt.21:33-44**), in which He makes the point that the Kingdom over which He is king will be taken from Israel and given to *a people producing its fruits, v.43* . **By crucifying Jesus, the Jews don't stop the Kingdom from coming; it is still at hand**. Later, when Pilot asks Jesus if he is King of the Jews, He affirms *so you have said, Mt.27:11* .

In **Jn.18:33-37** there is a more complete record of this exchange, where **Pilot asks Jesus how He can be King of the Jews since his own nation has rejected Him**. Jesus replies that the nature of His Kingdom is not political (*not of this world*), but spiritual. He was born to be king and came into the world to bear witness to the truth (reality), and everyone who is of the truth [*born into His Kingdom*] listens to Him [*acknowledges His authority as that very king*]. **The promise that David's seed would sit on his throne is not suspended**. Jesus is King of the Jews even though national Israel rejected Him.

Peter's message at Pentecost was that **the Jews did not stop the plan and purpose of God by crucifying the Messiah, Acts 2:29-36**. In fact **God's purpose was carried out through that very act, v.23**. Peter says David understood that because the Kingdom was to be everlasting. Messiah would have to be raised from the dead, **v.25-31**. **The Davidic Kingdom** is couched in terms much too broad to involve merely the sitting of a human being on an earthly throne over a small territory during the days of his life on earth, **v.34-36**. **It is precisely because God has seated Christ on David's throne that the Holy Spirit has been poured forth** [*His first act as king*] **v.32-33**. The church recognized that God had done exactly what He determined and said He would. Indeed, God used the very enmity of the people, both Jews and Gentiles, to accomplish His purposes and seated Christ on His throne, **4:24-28**; cf. **Ps.2 & 2 Sam.7:12-16**.

Christ received His spiritual Kingdom at His Ascension and He is now seated on His throne.

... according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that [age] which is to come, Eph.1:15-21.

Salvation comes through embracing the Son who is both Savior and Lord. God is transferring people from the domain [*dominion*] of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love (**Col.1:13**) because this is the acceptable time - the day of salvation. This day of grace will continue until the wedding hall is filled (**Mt.22**) and the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (**Rom.11:25**), at which time the door will finally be closed to the Kingdom of heaven. In this amazing Kingdom era we are told that *... the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD ... Isa.11:9* .

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE CORNERSTONE



A CORNERSTONE OF A BUILDING LIKE SOLOMON'S TEMPLE WAS SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS A FOUNDATION-STONE, AND IS SYMBOLIC OF CHRIST. THE APOSTLE PAUL REFERRED TO HIM AS THE HEAD OF THE CORNER AND THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE OF THE CHURCH, THE STONE THAT THE BUILDERS REJECTED BECAME THE CORNERSTONE, **PS.118:22** .

The image comes from ancient quarries where highly trained stonemasons carefully chose the stones used in construction. **No stone was more important than the cornerstone** because the integrity of the whole structure depended on the lines projected from it that set square, level, and plumb of the building. For that reason, builders inspected many stones, rejecting each one until they found the one they wanted. Rejected stones might be used in other parts of the building, but they would never become the cornerstone.

Peter preached to the Jewish leaders

⁸ Now Peter, **filled with the Holy Spirit** , said to the rulers and elders of the people, ⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. ¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you , the builders, which has become the head of the corner [metaphorical depiction of the church as a temple] . The Jewish leaders rejected him, but **God not only accepted him but put him in the position of highest honor**. Peter pressed the point home with this powerful conclusion: ¹² *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is **no other name** under heaven given among men by which we must be saved,* **Acts 4:** These words are utterly exclusive. There is no other hope, no other way, and no other name than that of Jesus. **If we would be saved, we must come God's way or we won't come at all!**

*The stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner [Jesus has been honored and vindicated by resurrection and exaltation] . This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes [comparable to Joseph's words to his brothers in **Gen.50:20** , you intended to harm me, but God amazingly used your evil motives to serve his good purposes] . This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it [celebrate it]. Save us, we pray [though originally a cry for help, the Heb. has come to mean joyous praise in song, Praise the Lord!] ... **Ps.118:22-25** .*

Cornerstone is an architectural term used twice in the NT

It speaks of the exalted Jesus as the chief foundation stone of the church, the cornerstone on which all the building depends ... **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, Eph.2:20** . For it stands in Scripture: Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame, **1 Pt.2:6** . The NT draws on two OT passages about the coming Messiah; From him shall come the cornerstone, from him the tent peg [**Isa.22:23**] , from him the battle bow [**Zech.9:10**] , from him every ruler—all of them together, **Zech.10:4**.

In **Isa.28:16** the prophet speaks God's words directly to the rulers in Jerusalem who saw themselves as being immune to the scourges of life because they were secure in themselves. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD , Behold, **I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion [heaven]** ... a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation : Whoever believes will not be shaken. God said their security was false and that he would lay a stone in Zion, a precious cornerstone, which really was secure and it was not those present rulers. Zechariah narrows this promise by saying that the cornerstone will come from the tribe of Judah, **Zech.10:3**.

The stone laid in Zion is precious to the believer. He is a stone of offense and stumbling to those who refuse to believe. **The metaphor is obvious: the cornerstone is either a source of blessing or judgment, depending on a person's attitude toward it.** In **Mt.21:44**, Jesus says, *He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.* The very foundation of the church is Jesus Christ. This was prophesied by the prophets of old and fulfilled through the incarnation death, and resurrection of Christ. **Those who believe are blessed and those who stumble over that rock chosen by God are condemned.**

The key to understanding this statement lies in the context of the verse and the larger conversation Jesus was having. He was teaching in the temple courts when the chief priests and elders approached Him and demanding to know the source of His authority. In response, Jesus asked them about John the Baptist—was he a prophet of God or not? The religious leaders, fearing the people's response, refused to reveal their true opinion on the matter. In turn, Jesus refused to give them any further explanation or justification related to the source of His authority.

²³ And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, **By what authority are you doing these things ...?** ²⁴ Jesus answered them, I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man? And they discussed it among themselves, saying, If we say, From heaven, he will say to us, Why then did you not believe him? ²⁶ But if we say, From man, we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet. ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, We do not know [true, but they refused to say what they believed] . And he said to them, **Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things, Mt.21:**

Jesus made it clear that the Jewish leaders themselves had no authority to judge Him. **He then related two parables concerning vineyards.** In the first, Jesus told of two sons whose father sent to work in the vineyard. The first son initially refused but later changed his mind and went to

work there. The second son promised to work, but never went to the vineyard. Jesus applied this to the religious leaders of Israel, who were like the second son—they expressed agreement with the Father but, in the final analysis, were disobedient. The sinners who responded to John the Baptist's message were like the first son—they seemed unlikely candidates for heaven, but they repented and thus will enter the kingdom.

²⁸ ... A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, Son, go and work in the vineyard today. ²⁹ And he answered, I will not, but **afterward he changed his mind and went**. ³⁰ And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, I go, sir, but did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father? They said, The first. Jesus said to them, Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, **you did not afterward change your minds and believe him, Mt.21:**

In **the second parable**, Jesus tells of a landowner who, at harvest time, sent some servants to his vineyard to collect the portion of fruit owed by his tenants. However, the farmers who were tending the vineyard were a wicked lot, and when the servants arrived, they beat some and killed others. Finally, the landowner sent his own son to collect the fruit. But instead of respecting him, they treated the son even worse, killing him and tossing his body out of the vineyard.

³³ ... There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard ... leased it to tenants, and went into another country. ³⁴ When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. ³⁵ And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another ... ³⁷ Finally he sent **his son** to them ... ³⁸ But ... ³⁹ they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and **killed him**. ⁴⁰ When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants? ⁴¹ They said to him, He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons. ⁴² Jesus then pressed His point home with a quotation from **Ps.118:22-23**. Have you never read in the Scriptures: **The stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner ; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes**. The progression is logical: **a rejection of John leads one naturally to a rejection of Christ, to whom John pointed**. [... John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! **Jn.1:29** .] ⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruit.

Jesus uses these truths to deliver a warning to the Jewish leaders. The stone in **verse 44** is also Jesus. In saying that those who fall on this stone **will be broken to pieces**, Jesus is warning against opposing Him. Defying Jesus is like beating one's head against a solid rock—a foolish action. In saying that those upon whom the stone falls **will be crushed**, Jesus is warning against ignoring Him or trivializing Him. Apathy towards Jesus is like standing in the way of a falling rock—another foolish action. **"I am here to do God's work," Jesus essentially says. The foundation for the church will be laid. It is unwise to oppose Me because God's work is not inconsequential.**

Rejection of the Savior is fatal. Unfortunately, many do reject Him. *He will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, Isa.8:14.* To persistently reject the Savior is to court judgment so severe that the only thing left will be dust. The prophet **Daniel** gives a similar picture of the Messiah, likening Him to a rock *cut out, but not by human hands*, which smashes into the nations of the world and completely obliterates them, **Dan.2:31-45**.

³¹ ... behold, a great image ... mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. ³² The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found *[gone like dust in the wind]*. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

³⁶ This was the dream ... ³⁷ You, O king ... are the head of gold. ³⁹ Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these ... ⁴³ As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. ⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the **God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed**, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever ...

Psalm 118 is talking about the work of God in Christ and referring to a day future to the psalmist when God would lay the foundation Stone that will bring salvation. *This is the day that the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it, v.24* . It refers to Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. It is not referring to just any day or every day, but to this special one-time series of events: (1) His **humiliation**; he is the Stone which the builders refused: they would go on in their building without him. This proved the ruin of those who thus made light of him. He is the sure **Rock of salvation** for those who believe, but a **stumbling stone** for those who do not. Sure and final judgment is represented here, **Rev.19:11-21**. Rejecters of Christ are rejected by God. (2) His **exaltation** to the head of the corner prefigures his **resurrection and vindication**.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16KYvflc2bE&list=RDOibli1rz7mw&index=2>

In Christ Alone (Official Lyric Video) - Keith & Kristyn Getty, Alison Krauss