

The Biblical Unitarian Podcast - by Dustin Smith, PhD

Episode 254—The Messiah in Psalm 118

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Introduction

We are in a series in which we work through the passages of the Old Testament that Jews and Christians came to understand as messianic prophecies. This week we are exploring Psalm 118 and the various ways it influenced the historical Jesus and the writers of the New Testament. Here are some questions I want to explore in this episode:

- What is the purpose of Psalm 118 and where were the original circumstances of its composition?
- In what ways did the NT authors reinterpret the rejected stone in a messianic way?
- How do the Gospel writers portray Jesus as the agent of God in light of Psalm 118?

Let's find out in this week's episode of the BUP!

1. A Close Look at Psalm 118

- *Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting. Oh let Israel say, "His lovingkindness is everlasting." Oh let the house of Aaron say, "His lovingkindness is everlasting."*
 - i. House of Aaron points to priestly, temple themes
- *Oh let those who fear the LORD say, "His lovingkindness is everlasting." From my distress I called upon the LORD; The LORD answered me and set me in a large place. The LORD is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me? The*

LORD is for me among those who help me; Therefore I will look with satisfaction on those who hate me. It is better to take refuge in the LORD Than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD Than to trust in princes. All nations surrounded me; In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off. They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me; In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off. They surrounded me like bees; They were extinguished as a fire of thorns; In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off. You pushed me violently so that I was falling, But the LORD helped me. The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation. The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly. The right hand of the LORD is exalted; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly. I will not die, but live, And tell of the works of the LORD. The LORD has disciplined me severely, But He has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness; I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; The righteous will enter through it.

- i. Gates of the temple are now explicitly mentioned
- *I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me, And You have become my salvation. The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone. This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.*
 - i. Rejected stone was to be used in building the temple.
 - ii. This rejected stone becomes something important and according to the doings of God.
- *This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. O LORD, do save, we beseech You; O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. The LORD is God, and He has given us light; Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.*
 - i. Temple festival discussion with the altar of sacrifice
- *You are my God, and I give thanks to You; You are my God, I extol You. Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting. (Psa 118:1-29)*

2. The Use of Psalm 118's Rejected Stone in the NT

And He began to speak to them in parables: "A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A VAT UNDER THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey" At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. "They took him, and

beat him and sent him away empty-handed. "Again he sent them another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. "And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so with many others, beating some and killing others. "He had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' "But those vine-growers said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!' "They took him, and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. "What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyard to others. "Have you not even read this Scripture: 'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES '?" And they were seeking to seize Him, and yet they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And so they left Him and went away. (Mark 12:1-12)

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead-- by this name this man stands here before you in good health. "He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone. "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:8-12)

3. The Use of Psalm 118's Agency Text in the NT

- *Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!" (Matt 21:8-9)*
- *"For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'" (Matt 23:39)*
- *On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel." (John 12:12-13)*

Thanks for listening to this week's episode!

Join us next week as we look at Psalm 132.

Please look forward to our next episode.

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