

Our God, The Rock

7 Bible Studies



central
BAPTIST CHURCH

Table of Contents

Study 1: Which Rock?	3
Study 2: Our Rock, Our Refuge	15
Study 3: The Rock Of Our Salvation.....	26
Study 4: Solid Rock, Soft Heart	39
Study 5: On This Rock... ..	51
Study 6: A House Built.....	63
Study 7: Cornerstone	75

Study 1: Which Rock?

Deuteronomy 32:1-43

❖ Introduction

As the book of Deuteronomy draws to a close, the children of Israel find themselves at the edge of the Promised Land. Moses, their leader for some 40 years, is told that he will not enter the land but soon die and be gathered to his fathers.

Deuteronomy closes with Moses sharing his final instructions. This includes *The Song of Moses*, the content of our study.

It's a long and difficult song with a confronting message. I'm sure it was hard to sing. Moses prophetically describes how things will turn out for Israel once they settle in the land God is giving them.

The Song of Moses speaks to a choice we all face. Will the Lord be our Rock, the foundation we build our hopes and lives upon, or will we choose something else?

❖ Thought Starter

1. Make a short list of the things that give you a sense of security in life.

Now rank them in order of importance.

“ ”

Sin is to seek to be God, self-existent and sovereign over oneself. Sin is a desire to create a secure, independent life apart from God. It's an unwillingness to trust God, to admit we are creatures dependent upon him. So the serpent promises Eve: "You will be like God"
(Genesis 3:5)

Timothy Keller - 'Romans 1-7 For You'

“ ”

❖ Prayer Starter

Lord, everything we are and everything we have comes from your good and gracious hand. Help us to see that clearly as we look at your Word and convict our hearts to repent of the idols we vainly hold fast to. Amen

❖ Digging Deeper

2. **Read Deuteronomy 32:1-4.** In verse 4 God is called 'The Rock'. In what ways is God like a rock?

If God is like a rock, how should God's people respond to him?



The rest of the song, from verse 5 onwards, describes how Israel will respond to the Lord, their Rock, once they enter the Promised Land and what the consequences will be. It's not easy reading.



3. **Read verses 5-6.** Make a comparison of how Israel is described in these verses with how the Lord is described in verse 4.

THE LORD (vs 4)

ISRAEL (vs 5-6)

Can you draw two pictures that visually reflect the difference between the Lord and his people?

THE LORD

ISRAEL

4. **Read verses 9-14.** Israel was founded on the Rock (Vs 6), even brought to life by the Rock (Vs 18). They are blessed. What images stand out to you and why?

5. **Read verse 15-18.** Despite all their blessings, Moses foretells Israel's response to their Rock when they enter the Promised Land. What does he describe?

The history of Israel in the Old Testament tells us that what Moses described is exactly what happened, over and over again. Are we any different? What false gods (or demons) are we tempted to sacrifice to as they lead us astray to forget the Lord, our true Rock?

6. **Read verse 28-29.** Why did Israel make such poor choices?

Compare Moses' reasons with what the Apostle Paul says of all humanity, including you and me, in Romans 1:21-23. What is our problem?

Where can wisdom be found? (See Job's answer: Job 28:12-28)

7. **Read verses 19-21, 30-33.** Stepping off the Rock (rebellious against God) has serious consequences for Israel in Verses 19-33. How is the exercise of God's wrath described by Moses?

8. (Optional Question) Compare Moses description of God exercising his wrath with how Paul describes the exercise of God's wrath in Romans 1:18, 24-25, 28. What is similar in Moses and Paul's description of God's wrath?

Can you identify any areas of life where you have reaped the destructive consequences of your own sinful choices?

9. If Moses stopped his song at Verse 33, it would have been a fair expression of God's wrath, but not a full expression of his true nature. When the Lord first proclaimed his name to Moses (as he proclaims his name again in verses 3-4) he revealed himself as, *'The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin...'* (Exodus 34:6-7).

Read verses 36-39. What aspect of God's nature is revealed towards the end of Moses' song?

Where does your hope lie?

❖ Making It Real

10. Compare The Song of Moses with Jesus' teaching as he concludes his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:24-27.

Review the list you wrote for question 1. Are you building your house on any false rocks that threaten your security in the living Rock, the God of your salvation?

Where can we turn so that we might be saved from our propensity to reject the Rock who gave us birth? (See Acts 4:10-12)



Let's finish our study, not with *The Song of Moses*,
but with the hopeful *Song of Edward Mote*, an
English cabinet-maker and Baptist pastor who, in
1834, wrote the following:

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness,
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.*

*On Christ the Solid Rock I stand:
All other ground is sinking sand;
All other ground is sinking sand.*



Study 2:

Our Rock, Our Refuge

Psalm 62

❖ Introduction

The most often repeated command in the Bible is ‘Do not be afraid!’. Similarly, Paul says, ‘Do not be anxious about anything...’ (Phil 4:6). How can we take these commands seriously when we live in such a dangerous world with perils at every turn?

Most of us will sit comfortably in an aeroplane 10km above the earth without a thought for the empty space beneath us. Likewise, most parents gladly let their children stand only meters from tigers at the zoo. Perils lose their potency when we know we stand on solid ground.

King David’s life was full of real and present dangers. His was a high-risk occupation. In Psalm 62 David recognises this reality even as he boldly affirms that he is standing on solid ground. His faith is in God, The Rock, and therefore he need not give way to fear and anxiety.

❖ Thought Starter

1. List three things that cause you anxiety.

Can you identify why they cause you anxiety?

How do they threaten your sense of security?

“ ”

Psalm 61, immediately preceding our psalm for study, begins with the following plea. Pray it together before moving into silent prayer.

*Here my cry, O God: listen to my prayer.
From the ends of the earth I call to you,
I call as my heart grows faint;
lead me to the rock that is higher than I.
For you have been a refuge,
a strong tower against the foe.*

(Psalm 61:1-3)

“ ”

❖ Prayer Starter

Bring the anxieties listed in question 1 before the Lord. Ask that he would bring his peace and love into each circumstance. Affirm with thanksgiving: ‘Jesus is Lord and the Rock of my salvation’. Amen

❖ Digging Deeper

2. **Read Psalm 62:1-2.** As well as being David's rock, what other terms does David use to describe his relationship with God.

Can you identify any correspondence between these terms and David reference to God as his rock?

3. **Read verses 3-4.** David now begins to speak against the threats of those who oppose him. How do you imagine David felt as he was writing these lines and how might that compare with how he felt as he was writing Verses 1-2?

4. **Read verses 5-6.** Verses 5-6 are very similar to verses 1-2. Can you spot the subtle differences?

Do you think there is any significance to these subtle differences? Why does David repeat himself in this way?

5. **Read verses 5-8** Write down all the significant words that are used more than once in Verses 1-2 and Verses 5-8.

What impression are you left with? What do you think is the major emphasis or theme of David's psalm?

6. In Verse 8 David moves from personal reflection to an outward call urging God's people to put their trust in the LORD. He uses two images: one soft and fluid (pour out your hearts), the other stable and secure (God is our refuge).

How do these two images express, in different ways, the blessings of saving faith?

7. **Read verses 9-10.** God is David's rock: weighty, stable, and secure. However, many reject the LORD and put their faith in other things. What alternative securities does David mention?

How does David compare them to faith in God, the Rock?

If measured on a balance, how weighty are the things you are tempted to trust in for ultimate security?

8. **Read verses 11-12.** David finishes with an emphatic statement about two things God possesses. The first is ‘**oz**, a Hebrew word meaning ‘*strength, might*’. The second is ***hesed***, a word that expresses what is true and dependable, particularly as it relates to keeping covenant relationship. It is often translated ‘*steadfast love*’ or ‘*loving kindness*’.

How do these two attributes relate to God as our rock?

How are these two attributes, *strength* and *steadfast love*, manifest in the ministry of Jesus?

9. The last line in Psalm 62, '*You reward everyone according to what they have done*', at first seems to jar with the overall emphasis of the psalm. Review the entire psalm. What active response (or work) does David call for throughout Psalm 62?

What active response is our only way to salvation and security today? (See Romans 5:1)

❖ Making It Real

10. Pray through Psalm 62 making it personal to your life today and your relationship with God.

What practical steps can you take to be more active in *pouring out your heart*, in the confidence that the Lord, abounding in strength and steadfast love, is your Rock and your Refuge?



‘Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit’.

(Jeremiah 17:7-8)



Study 3:

The Rock Of Our Salvation

Psalm 40

❖ Introduction

Beneath one of the towers of St Andrew's Castle in Scotland is a bottle dungeon. Its shape resembles the inside of a bottle dug out of rock. Prisoners would be lowered through the round entrance at the top. There was no way of escape unless someone came to haul the detainee out from above. It was a dreadful imprisonment.

In a similar way, when the prophet Jeremiah warned the leaders of Israel about the imminent fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, *'they lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud, and Jeremiah sank down in the mud'* (Jeremiah 38:6).

The Bible tells us that spiritually we are all in a bottle dungeon, captured by our sins, without hope and without God in the world. We cannot save ourselves. If we are to be released, we need someone to come, lift us out of the pit of our sin, and set us free.

In Psalm 40 King David rejoices because he has experienced just such a salvation. He was trapped. He needed rescue. His only hope was the LORD. David's story in Psalm 40 should be our story.

❖ Thought Starter

1. Recall a time in your life when you were rescued or 'saved' from danger. Describe the incident.

What role did you play in being rescued?

What role did your saviour play?

Where did you end up once you were finally safe?

How did you respond?

“ ”

“Please - Aslan,” said Lucy, “can anything be done to save Edmund?”

“All shall be done,” said Aslan.

C.S. Lewis – *‘The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe’*

‘Christianity is in its very essence a rescue religion’.

John R. W. Stott – *‘The Authentic Jesus’*

“ ”

❖ Prayer Starter

Lord, you are our Rock. There is no other. As we study your Word, by the power of your Spirit, take us from a place of answering questions, to an experience of transformation such that we rest our faith, hope, and life completely in the victory won for us by your Son, Jesus.
Amen

❖ Digging Deeper

2. **Read Psalm 40:1-3.** King David describes his experience of salvation.

What role did David play?

What role did the Lord play in David's salvation?

Where did David end up once he was finally safe?

How did he respond?

Where else might David have turned? If he did try these alternatives, how might his outcomes be different?

3. **Read verses 4-5.** In humility, David, recognising that he cannot save himself turns to the Lord in simple faith. In this, he considers himself blessed. Why does he make that claim?

4. David's greatest problem was his sin. He, and the kings that followed him, consistently failed to keep God's law. They kept turning away to serve false gods that could never save.

Read verses 6-8. Throughout their reigns, marked as they were by sin and rebellion, at the temple adjacent to the king's palace, animal blood was repeatedly being shed before the LORD as an offering to symbolically atone for the sin of the king and his people. But, according to David, how effective were these sacrifices?

David knew the temple sacrifices could never secure his salvation and a right standing before God. So how, instead, does he express his hope that he is acceptable before God?



David and all of Israel's kings after him failed to do God's will and live as if God's law were written upon their hearts.

In the New Testament, Hebrews 10:1-5 teaches that the temple sacrifices, repeated endlessly year after year, king after king, failed to cleanse even one person from their sin. They merely acted as a reminder of our sinful hearts and urgent need for cleansing.

But there is hope. Matthew begins his gospel by introducing Jesus as God's promised Messiah, a direct descendant of King David who was born to save his people from their sins.



- 5. Read Hebrews 10:5-10** (Read up to Verses 14 if you can) The writer to the Hebrews quotes Psalm 40:6-8 as if the words of David are the words of Jesus. In other words, Jesus becomes the true fulfilment of Psalm 40 as great King David's greater Son.

What is meant in by the statement 'He sets aside the first to establish the second' (Vs 9)?

Ultimately what rock is David standing upon in Psalm 40, even if he is not yet aware of the fullness of God's plan to save him from his sin?

Are you standing on a solid rock or sinking in the mud and mire?

6. **Read Psalm 40:9-10.** Those who have been saved from great peril almost always have a good news story to share.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is 'good news' of salvation. Rewrite Verses 9-10 using your own words and your personal experience of salvation.

7. **Read verses 11-15.** Those getting baptised often share their story of salvation. It's always encouraging. We always rejoice. But it is never the end of the story. Psalm 40 finishes not by looking back to salvation past, but with an eye to the future. In our ongoing struggle with sin, there is always need for mercy and faithfulness from the rock of our salvation.

Make a list of the perils that continue to threaten David's security. Which of these do you think is his greatest problem?

Which of these perils do you feel is the most acute threat to your life today?

8. **Read verses 16-17.** Write down three words that encapsulate David's thoughts as he finishes his song of salvation.

Compare David's introduction to Psalm 40 (Vs 1-3) with his conclusion (Vs 16-17). What is....

SIMILAR

DIFFERENT

❖ Making It Real

9. If you know Jesus as the rock of your salvation, write a brief account of your good news story? Think about where you were (the mud and the mire), what you did, what God did, where you ended up once you knew you were safe, and how you responded (both then and now).

On the scale below mark how stable you feel in standing on the rock of your salvation? What is stopping you scoring higher?



Or are you still in the mud and mire?



In the book of Revelation, John hears the song of a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people, and language as they stand before the throne of God and in front of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus. They sing,

Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.

(Revelation 7:10)

They are still standing on the rock.
Is this your song?



Study 4:
Solid Rock,
Soft Heart

Psalm 95

❖ Introduction

When God saved Israel out of slavery in Egypt, he brought them to the foot of Mount Sinai. There, before giving his Law, he calls them to be a worshipping community: *‘If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’* (Exodus 19:5-6).

The Law they were about to receive spelled out in some detail what their worship should look like. As a kingdom of priests, they were able to approach God with confidence, knowing that they were his treasured possession. As a holy nation, they were to bow before his majesty in humble, reverent awe. And, most importantly, as a worshipping community they were to listen to God so that they might keep covenant and obey him fully.

How did Israel do? Welcome to Psalm 95. In graphic language, it presents the ongoing challenge God’s people face throughout the ages as we seek to be a worshipping community, trusting in God, our solid rock, as we worship him with soft, obedient hearts.

❖ Thought Starter

1. List some of the things you think of when you hear the word 'worship' being used.

What do you think are the essential elements of true worship?

Here are two definitions of worship:

“ ”

“Worship is expressing our love to God for who is, what he’s said, and what he’s doing.

“There are many appropriate ways to express our love to God. These include praying, singing, thanking, listening, giving, testifying, trusting, obeying his Word, among many others. God, not man, is the focus and centre of our worship.”

Rick Warren – ‘The Purpose Driven Church’

“Worship is an active response to God whereby we declare his worth.”

Ronald Allen – ‘Worship: Rediscovering the Missing Jewel’

“ ”

But what does Psalm 95 suggest?

❖ Prayer Starter

Dear Lord, we acknowledge that you are worthy of our highest praise. We submit our lives before you. As we come to your holy Word, help us to hear your truth and believe that it applies to us. Then, by your Spirit, give us strength to obey. Amen

❖ Digging Deeper

2. **Read Psalm 95:1-2.** What words would you use to describe the worshipper of these verses? List some words beneath each heading.

Emotionally

Physically

Audibly

Can you sum up their approach to God using just one word?

3. **Read verses 3-5.** What reasons are given to elicit such enthusiastic worship? How do these relate to the LORD as the 'Rock of our Salvation'?

4. **Read verse 6.** What words would you use to describe the worshipper of this verse? List some words beneath each heading.

Emotionally

Physically

Audibly

Can you sum up their approach to God using just one word?

5. **Read verses 6b-7.** What reasons are given to elicit such devotion? How do these relate to the Lord as the 'Rock of our Salvation'?

6. In the Hebrew Bible, and in all subsequent translations, Verse 7 finishes with the suspended phrase, *'Today if you hear his voice'*. It leads on naturally to become the start of the next sentence, and this is how it is formatted and punctuated in most Bibles. But perhaps it was intentionally, even ambiguously, written as both the conclusion of Verse 7 and the introduction of Verse 8.

How might this phrase be understood if it is treated as the conclusion of Verse 7?

How do you think it is best understood within the context of Psalm 95?



When the children of Israel were saved out of slavery and called to serve the Lord as his worshipping community, they accepted his calling and Law with a resounding ‘Yes!’ (Exodus 19:8). Yet, during their wilderness wanderings, most of the time they lived out their calling with a resounding ‘No!’. They failed to listen to God’s voice and worship him as they should.

In Exodus 17, after the Lord has already demonstrated his power and love by provided daily food in the form of manna and quail, Israel complains of thirst and questions their salvation. The Lord commands Moses to strike a rock (symbolically the rock of their salvation - 1 Corinthians 9:4) so that water might come forth. Moses called that place Massah (*testing*) and Meribah (*quarrelling*).

A similar incident occurs at the end of their wilderness wanderings in Numbers 20. The people complain of thirst and wish they were back in Egypt. Again, Moses is instructed to strike a rock, but this time he does so in anger - an act of rebellion leading even him to be excluded from entering the Promised Land. The waters of that place were again called Meribah (*quarrelling*).

How could they lack faith and rebel after such a remarkable salvation?



7. **Read verses 7b-9.** In Verse 7 there is a radical change of tone. The psalmist now begins to warn his readers against responding to God's goodness like Israel did in their wilderness wanderings. What words would you use to describe the non-worshippers of these verses? List some words beneath each heading.

Emotionally

Physically

Audibly

Can you sum up their rejection of God using just one word?

8. **Read verses 10-11.** Israel chose not to hear nor obey God's voice. What are the consequences of failing to listen to and obey the voice of God?

What does this suggest about the nature of true worship?
(See also the words of Jesus in John 4:23-24).

9. **Read Hebrews 4:1-16.** Optional Advanced Question: Hebrews 4 teaches about ‘rest for the people of God’. The writer mounts his argument from the second half of Psalm 95.

On what basis can we enter God’s rest? (See Verses 1-3, 11, 14-16)

In light of Psalm 95, why do you think the writer puts so much emphasis on the Word of God in Hebrews 4:12-13?

❖ Making It Real

10. Faithful worship, as expressed in Psalm 95, involves:

- a) approaching God with confidence for he is the Rock of our salvation,
- b) bowing before him in dependent humility recognising his majesty and loving care,
- c) listening to his voice and obeying his Word.

What importance did having a soft heart play in each of these aspects of worship? How soft is your heart in each aspect?

Is it possible to have a form of a) and b) without c)?
At what cost?

What aspect of worship do you most need to be mindful of?



‘Today, if you hear his voice...’

(Psalm 95:7)

*‘Will you hear his voice **today?** Here you are,
singing, and bowing, but are you **listening?**’*

Michael Wilcock - *The Message of Psalms 73-150*



Study 5:

On This Rock...

Matthew 16:5-20

❖ Introduction

Matthew begins his gospel with explicit statements. The story he is about to recount is the story of God's Messiah, an anointed king from the line of King David for whom the people of Israel have been waiting for centuries. Jesus, born in humble circumstances, is '*Immanuel*' - God with us. He has come from the Father to bring restoration to the entire creation and to save his people from their sins.

After his baptism Jesus begins to proclaim the kingdom of heaven. He teaches with authority. He performs miraculous signs demonstrating God's majesty and power, and bringing restoration and healing to a broken world.

The passage before us recounts two separate, but related, incidents. The second of which is the critical turning point in Matthew's gospel. After this, Jesus heads to Jerusalem and the cross. Both incidents address the issue of faith. What are we putting our trust in, and will our landing place be secure?

❖ Thought Starter

1. If you were to do a survey on George Street, asking ‘What do you make of Jesus Christ?’, what sort of answers do you think you would get?

What would your answer be?

“ ”

*The man who leaves the doctor's office and does nothing as a result of the declaration of the physician, is simply declaring to the world that he does not believe the diagnosis. The secular word is not befuddled. It knows what **believe** means... He who does not act on what he has heard is simply a man who does not believe.*

*How did Christ begin his ministry?... “Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent and believe” (Mark 1:15). Throughout Scripture there is every indication that Jesus used the words **believe** and **faith** in a way that all would understand. There was nothing confusing about it. Thus, to have faith is to believe; to believe is to have faith.*

What are we to believe? Believing the Word of God, that is faith! And the supreme object of our faith is the person of Jesus Christ himself.

James Kennedy - ‘Truths that Transform’

“ ”

❖ Prayer Starter

Father, as we dig deep into your Word, help us to believe that it truly does come from you - Almighty and Sovereign God. Open our eyes that we might see the light of your glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ such that we take hold of him by faith and are transformed by his love. Amen

❖ Digging Deeper

Jesus' disciples have recently witnessed him feeding a crowd of four thousand with seven loaves and a few small fish (Matthew 15:29-39). Much earlier, they watched as he provided food for a crowd of five thousand with only five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:13-21). Surely, by now they knew that Jesus was able to satisfy their every need. But did they really believe?

2. **Read Matthew 16:5-10.** The disciples are confused by Jesus' statement in Verse 6. (Note: 'Be on your guard...' could also be translated 'Pay close attention to...', or 'Watch out for...') Perhaps this was Jesus' strange way of rebuking them for forgetting to take bread for their journey. Perhaps not! What does Jesus actually accuse them of?



The Pharisees and Sadducees were religious leaders within Judaism. They often disagreed with one another but found unity in their common opposition to Jesus. He threatened their position and power. Furthermore, Jesus had no hesitation in rebuking them as blind guides. They were convinced that their ancestry and religious practices secured them a right standing before God. Jesus corrected this error with bold statements. He told them that, rather than having a superior relationship with God, they were vipers and hypocrites who needed to repent. Indeed, they stood under the judgement of God (See Matthew 3:7-10).



3. **Read verse 11-12.** What do you think Jesus means by '*the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees*'?

Yeast is very small, almost innocuous. But once added to dough, it works secretly and noiselessly, changing the shape of the whole batch. How might '*the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees*' have a negative and growing impact on the faith of Jesus' disciples?

4. Jesus moves with his disciples to a non-Jewish area where they are surrounded by symbols of idolatry and false gods. In this foreign place Jesus asks his disciples some serious questions.

Read verse 13-14. *‘What do you make of Jesus?’* How do the people respond and what is the significance of their response?

5. **Read verses 15-16.** Jesus asks another question and Peter responds with a bold statement of faith - this is the major turning point in Matthew’s gospel.

Why is Peter’s response so important?

6. **Read verses 17-18.** Jesus gave Peter (Greek: *petros*) his name (Mark 3:16, John 1:42). Before that he was called Simon. *Petros* means ‘*stone, pebble*’ and is slightly different to *petra*, which means ‘*rock, solid rock*’ (Verse 18 ‘*on this rock*’).

Reviewing our studies up to this point, who or what has been ‘the Rock’ throughout the Old Testament?

Who or what do you think Jesus means by ‘this Rock’ upon which he will build his church?

7. Consider the yeast image (Verses 5-12) alongside the rock image (Vs 18). How do they compare in terms of size, weight, and impact?

YEAST

ROCK

How does this relate to what we choose to put our faith in?

8. **Read Ephesians 2:19-22.** Comment on the relationship, if any, between what Paul says in Ephesians and what Jesus says in Matthew 16.

9. **Read verses 19-20.** *‘The gates of Hades’* (Vs 18) are the entrance of the place of death. Jesus claims that death loses and life wins for those, like Peter, who put their faith in him. Our response to Jesus’ question, *‘Who do you say I am?’* (Vs 15) is therefore a matter of life and death.

What are you saying if you give someone the keys to your house?

Peter, as a founding apostle, was entrusted with the good news of the kingdom. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, the good news that Jesus is the promised Messiah and saving Lord is no longer to be kept hidden (Unlike Verse 20). The keys have been passed on to us. (See Matthew 28:16-20). We are called to hold open the door of salvation that Peter first opened to both Jews and Gentiles.

How are we managing the keys entrusted to us?

❖ Making It Real

10. If Jesus were to ask, 'But what about you. Who do you say I am?', how would you respond?

Compare your answer to question 1.

Can you identify any *yeast* infecting your life and impacting your standing upon the solid rock, faith in Jesus Christ?



*For it is by grace you have been saved, through
faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the
gift of God - not by works, so that no one can
boast.*

(Ephesians 2:8-9)



Study 6:

A House Built...

Matthew 7:24-29

❖ Introduction

What are you building your life on? We're all building a life of sorts. Each day we add or remove a brick. But do we have a plan, a clear vision of the sort of life we want to build? Will it be attractive and functional? Will it be self-centred or other-person centred? Most importantly, will it be secure? How will it cope when the great storm wells up that threatens to knock it all over?

These are the questions Jesus raises as reaches the end of his 'Sermon on the Mount'. Since Matthew 5, he has been teaching his disciples about what life should look like for those who enter his kingdom. He finishes by drawing a simple analogy with a very clear message. He urges his disciples to take his words to heart and build their lives on them.

❖ Thought Starter

1. Write down a life choice you made that turned out to be wise. Next, write down a choice that turned out to be a foolish choice.

On what basis did you decide one was a wise choice and the other a foolish choice?

“ ”

Joshua, with the LORD going before, led the children of Israel into the Promised Land. After they were settled, as an old man, knowing his time was drawing to a close, he gathers the people to renew their covenant with the LORD. He leaves them with this charge:

‘Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshipped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living.

But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.

(Joshua 24:14-15)

“ ”

❖ Prayer Starter

Dear Father, you are our God. There is no other. And so, in humility, as Joshua did, we once again affirm our commitment to serve you. Speak to us through your Word so as to confirm our faith and conviction, that we might ever build our house upon the solid rock of our Saviour and Lord, your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

❖ Digging Deeper

2. **Read Matthew 7:24-27.** Jesus draws a simple comparison between two men and the two houses they have built. Verses 24-25 and Verses 26-27 are almost identical. List the words (or phrases) that differ.

What is the critical difference between the two houses?

What is the critical difference between the two builders?

3. Draw a picture of what you imagine the two houses looked like after they were completed.

WISE MAN'S HOUSE

FOOLISH MAN'S HOUSE

Now draw a picture of what you imagine they looked like after the storm hit.

WISE MAN'S HOUSE

FOOLISH MAN'S HOUSE

Can you identify any 'nice looking houses' in your world or experience that may actually be built on unreliable foundations?

4. **Read Matthew 7:13-14, 18-21.** From Matthew 7:13 onwards, Jesus begins drawing his sermon to a close by making a distinction between two types of people who will experience two very different outcomes.

From time to time, and at different stages of life, all of us are impacted by '*the storms of life*'. Considering what Jesus says in the above verses, what does he primarily have in mind as he speaks of the two builders and their two houses?

5. What authority is Jesus claiming for himself (verses 24 and 26) as he concludes his Sermon on the Mount?

Do you find his claim... (circle all those that apply)

ARROGANT

AUDACIOUS

AMAZING

HOPEFUL

UNBELIEVABLE

IGNORANT

CHALLENGING

BELIEVABLE

FEARFUL

ASTONISHING

DELUSIONAL

CONSISTENT

6. **Read verses 28-29.** How do the crowds respond to what Jesus is saying and his remarkable claims about himself?

7. Perhaps Jesus was a great preacher and won the crowd over by his eloquence. Or perhaps his authority was recognised because he spoke truth and backed his claims through his life and works. Consider what Jesus suggests about himself in the following portions of his Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:11-12

Matthew 5:17

Matthew 5:21-22

Matthew 7:21-23

Who, then, does Jesus claim to be?

“ ”

Jesus... told people that their sins were forgiven. ...This makes sense only if He really was the God whose laws are broken and whose love is wounded in every sin.

...I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

C. S. Lewis – ‘Mere Christianity’

“ ”

❖ Making It Real

8. Can you identify any aspect of Jesus' teaching you are still struggling to put into practice?

What small steps can you take this week to secure your house on the rock?

Do you have a plan or clear vision of the sort of life you want to build? What would it look like?



‘Effective risk management eats insurance for breakfast.’

Jesus is not an insurance policy. He is Lord, the cornerstone upon whom we must build our lives and our church. He alone is the rock of our salvation. He can secure our life today and for all eternity.

The Apostle Paul spells out the hope of every believer:

‘...you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead - Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.’

(1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)



Study 7:

Cornerstone

Acts 4:1-13

❖ Introduction

The world is being turned upside down. It's two thousand years ago in Jerusalem and followers of Jesus of Nazareth are claiming that their master, who was crucified only months earlier, has risen from the dead and that God has made him both Lord and Messiah! The world is being turned upside down and not everybody is happy.

Two of Jesus' disciples, Peter and John, have healed a man in Jesus' name who had been lame from birth. The miracle was undeniable. Then they preached to the gathered crowd, declaring *'By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see'* (Acts 3:16).

That's a big claim and not everyone is happy. In fact, some are very unhappy. What happens next, recounted in our passage, helps us to understand what it means to put our faith in the name of Jesus - the one who alone is our cornerstone.

❖ Thought Starter

1. Would you classify yourself as bold or cautious? What animal could best describe your boldness/cautiousness ratio?

What impact do you think your personality in this regard has on your witness for Jesus?



Jesus never promised his disciples an easy life. But he did promise that he would be with them always.

“Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.”

(Mark 13:11)

Jesus’ words are proven faithful in the passage before us today.



❖ Prayer Starter

Lord God, by the power of your Holy Spirit, the same power that transformed Peter and John’s testimony two thousand years ago, teach us, convict our hearts, and lead us evermore into the likeness of Jesus - our Lord and Cornerstone. Amen

❖ Digging Deeper

2. **Read Acts 4:1-6.** Briefly consider the actions of the priests, captain of the temple guard, and Sadducees as recounted in Luke's gospel (Luke 22:1-6, 47-71).

Why would the healing of a lame man and the subsequent teaching of the apostles agitate them so much?

Note: The Sadducees were the dominant party within the Jewish ruling council, the Sanhedrin. They readily collaborated with the Roman occupying power and objected on principle to the doctrine of bodily resurrection after death.

3. How many groups or individuals can you identify in Verses 1-6 opposed to Peter and John?

Do you ever feel outnumbered in taking a stand for Jesus? If so, how do you generally respond?

4. In New Testament times, reference to one's 'name' was a reference to one's essential nature, personality, authority, and power.

Read verses 7-10. Standing before the Sanhedrin, as Jesus had done only months before, Peter moves, 'in Jesus' name', from defence to offence. What does Peter say to explain his actions?

What does Peter say to challenge the Jewish leaders?

Note: The word translated 'healed' in Verses 9 & 12 is the Greek word Sozo, usually translated 'save'. In other words, Peter is very clear. The lame man was saved/healed by the name of Jesus.



Psalm 118 is a Messianic psalm. Psalm 118:25-26 were shouted by the crowds when Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week before his crucifixion (eg. Luke 19:38).

Verses 22-23 are quoted numerous times in the New Testament as prophecy about Jesus. Jesus quotes them regarding his own ministry (Mathew 21:42, Mark 12:10-11, Luke 20:17). Paul and Peter quote them in their letters in relation to Jesus (Ephesians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:4-7). Finally, Peter quotes them in our passage as he gives his defence before the Jewish leaders (Acts 4:11).



Note: The 'cornerstone' was either the highest load-bearing stone right under the roof or the foundational keystone giving shape and direction to a building.

5. **Read verses 11-12.** How do you understand, 'Jesus is the stone the builders rejected'?

How do you understand 'Jesus... has become the cornerstone'?

6. In our previous studies in the Old Testament God has been identified as 'The Rock'. As we came to the New Testament, Jesus and his words have been spoken of as 'The Rock'. In this passage Jesus is identified as 'The Cornerstone'.

How are these two terms similar and different?

SIMILAR

DIFFERENT

7. Optional question. **Read Ephesians 2:19-20 and 1 Peter 2: 4-10.** How do Paul and Peter use the image of Jesus as a cornerstone?

What implications does this have for how we relate to Jesus today?

8. **Read verse 12.** Peter ends his defence before the Sanhedrin and draws his conclusions.

How does his statement apply...

To the lame man who was healed

To the religious leaders

To the whole of humanity

Our witness (individually and as a church)

Does it apply to you? What about your family, and friends?

❖ Making It Real

9. **Read verse 13.** Consider your own witness. Do you think others would *‘take note knowing that you have been with Jesus’*?

What is comforting to you about this story? Discomforting? Why?

Review your answer to question 1. Do you think you would change your answer, or do you have a desire to change your answer, after completing this study?



Let's finish our studies with another song.
This time a contemporary song from Hillsong
Worship. Can you affirm with joy...

Christ alone, Cornerstone
Weak made strong in the Saviour's love
Through the storm, He is Lord
Lord of all

Reuben Morgan, Jonas Myrin, Eric Liljero – 'Cornerstone'





© Central Baptist Church 2024

619 George St, Sydney NSW 2000
centralbaptist.org.au

