

INTERVIEW WITH A STONE

by Kenneth D. Onstot



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Interview With a Stone

“ ... the very stones would cry out”

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Reporter

She or he holds a stone and speaks to it as one would to a hand puppet.

Stone

The stone is held by the Reporter and voiced by an Off-stage person with a microphone.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Summary: On Palm Sunday Jesus says to those who want him to quiet the crowd, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out” (Luke 19:40). This two-person play looks at Palm Sunday and Good Friday from a new angle: the testimony of a stone on the road to Jerusalem describing the strange figure that rode in on Palm Sunday and was led out on Good Friday. It is based on Luke 19:28-44.

Props: The only props are a stone large enough to see yet small enough to hold in one hand, and a microphone for the Reporter to hold up to the Stone when it is answering a question.

Costumes: The Reporter should wear modern-day professional attire, such as a suit.

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REPORTER: *(To the audience)* Dignitaries who meet with the President of the United States are often shown standing or sitting in front of a Swedish ivy plant in the Oval Office. Imagine the stories this plant would tell if it could talk — the conversations, the deals, even the scandals that have been played out in its presence — everything from Watergate to Monica Lewinsky. In Luke’s account of Palm Sunday, the Pharisees tell Jesus to stop his followers from shouting. But Jesus says, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out” (19:40). If those stones that had been lying on the road to Jerusalem for thousands of years had shouted out, what would they say? Let’s ask one of them. *(The REPORTER picks up a large STONE, which can be held in one hand. The REPORTER holds the stone at eye level and points a microphone at it to answer questions. The STONE’s part is read by an unseen person through another microphone.)* Excuse me, but I have never interviewed a stone before. How should I address you?

STONE: Like you would a rock star.

REPORTER: I see. Well, how long have you been sitting on this road to Jerusalem?

STONE: Longer than you can imagine. You human beings measure lives in decades; we measure ours in geological ages. To us, something six thousand years old is contemporary.

REPORTER: What have you seen in all those years?

STONE: I’ve seen the rise and fall of kings. I’ve heard the shouts and cheers of crowds. I’ve felt the hooves of horses, the tramp of armies, the wheels of chariots, the shuffle of pilgrims, and the tapping canes of blind beggars.

REPORTER: Who are some of the most interesting people you have met?

STONE: I go all the way back to Abraham. I was here when

1 Melchizedek, the king of Salem, which is short for
2 Jerusalem, received a tithe or tenth of Abraham's
3 possessions as an offering. I was here when Joshua
4 tried to capture Jerusalem and failed. I was here when
5 David infiltrated the city by sending his troops up a
6 water shaft. On my road David brought the Ark of the
7 Covenant into Jerusalem. By my road Solomon brought
8 the cedars of Lebanon for the temple. On my road came
9 the Queen of Sheba and the armies of Assyria, and the
10 siege works of Babylonians. By my road the people of
11 Israel were led into exile at the time of Jeremiah and
12 brought back at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

13 **REPORTER:** So you have seen a lot of history.

14 **STONE:** I have seen pharaohs of Egypt, kings of Greece,
15 emperors of Rome, Turkish sultans, medieval
16 crusaders, British soldiers, and Israeli commandoes.
17 Every kind of king and conqueror imaginable has
18 traveled down my road, but none like the one I saw that
19 Sunday afternoon before Passover.

20 **REPORTER:** Really. Tell us about him.

21 **STONE:** They said his name was Jesus. He was part of a
22 group of pilgrims coming from Galilee to Jerusalem for
23 the Passover. I could tell they were Galileans by their
24 accent. In many ways they were just like any other
25 group coming to the temple for worship. Normally, as
26 people approach the temple, they recite the words of
27 Psalm 118: "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of
28 the Lord" (Verse 26). Then they form a procession,
29 sometimes even waving branches as they make their
30 way up to the altar to offer a sacrifice.

31 **REPORTER:** What was different about this group?

32 **STONE:** The Galileans did something strange. They not only
33 waved palm branches; they spread their coats on the
34 road, as if rolling out a carpet for a king. Personally, I
35 have never understood why people thought they had to

1 cover up perfectly beautiful stones before a king could
2 pass over them. I think we are quite attractive.

3 **REPORTER:** Is that all they did?

4 **STONE:** They also cheered for him as if he were a king. It is
5 traditional for people coming to Jerusalem to say,
6 “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”
7 But these people said, “Blessed is the king who comes in
8 the name of the Lord!” (Luke 19:38). I have seen plenty of
9 kings in my time, but never one like this.

10 **REPORTER:** What was different about him?

11 **STONE:** He was riding a donkey. Personally, I hate
12 donkeys — not just because of their sharp hooves, but
13 because of other things that donkeys do on roads.

14 **REPORTER:** I understand. But what is so unusual about a
15 donkey in ancient Jerusalem?

16 **STONE:** Donkeys are pack animals. No king rides into a city
17 on a donkey. I have seen Roman governors charge in on
18 horses and Egyptian commanders ride in on chariots; I
19 have even seen King Herod brought in on a golden
20 chair carried by his servants. But no great ruler ever
21 comes into the city on a young donkey. The rider’s feet
22 were barely off the ground!

23 **REPORTER:** So what did your leaders think about this?

24 **STONE:** They were terrified! Not of the guy on the donkey,
25 but of the Romans. They told Jesus to make his
26 followers quit calling him a king.

27 **REPORTER:** What were they afraid of?

28 **STONE:** The Romans don’t take kindly to anyone claiming
29 to be a king. And they tend to overreact. If some Jew
30 claims to be a king, they arrest everyone who might be
31 remotely associated with him and put them on a cross.
32 I’ve got bloodstains from countless people that Pontius
33 Pilate, the Roman governor, has marched down my
34 road to be crucified.

35 **REPORTER:** So your leaders were afraid that if Pilate

1 heard the crowd calling Jesus a king, they might start
2 rounding people up and killing them?

3 STONE: Exactly. They were almost desperate to make Jesus
4 quiet the crowd. But Jesus said that if the crowd were
5 silent, the stones would shout.

6 REPORTER: That must have made you feel good.

7 STONE: It did, actually. We stones are not afraid of Roman
8 governors.

9 REPORTER: But if he really is a king, why did he ride in on
10 a donkey?

11 STONE: I could not understand that myself until I heard
12 people discussing a verse from the prophet Zechariah.
13 It says, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud,
14 O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you;
15 triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on
16 a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (9:9).

17 REPORTER: So that explains the donkey.

18 STONE: There is more. It says, “He will cut off the chariot
19 from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and
20 the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command
21 peace to the nations” (Zechariah 9:10).

22 REPORTER: What does that mean?

23 STONE: Normally a king brings peace by amassing armies
24 and weapons and wiping out his enemies. But this king
25 will bring peace by getting rid of weapons and armies.
26 Not that I object, you understand. A few less chariot
27 wheels would be a good thing for us roads. Fewer
28 potholes. And as for war horses, they have the same
29 problem as donkeys.

30 REPORTER: A king who brings peace without armies or
31 weapons. Can that work?

32 STONE: I don’t know. But the alternative doesn’t work
33 either. I’ve seen almost every army in the
34 Mediterranean come down this road: Egyptians,
35 Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans.

1 Since the time of David, the walls of this city have been
2 torn down four times. The temple has been destroyed
3 three times. Twice the people have been forced out of
4 their homes into exile by a foreign conqueror. There
5 have been plenty of chariots and war horses on this
6 road, but not much peace.

7 REPORTER: So what happened to the man on the donkey?

8 STONE: When he arrived in front of the temple, he slid off
9 his donkey and began to weep. His tears were hot and
10 salty. He said, "If you, even you, had only recognized on
11 this day the things that make for peace! But now they
12 are hidden from your eyes" (Luke 19:42).

13 REPORTER: It sounds like he was not expecting to succeed.

14 STONE: It was worse than that. He said that enemies would
15 overrun the city of Jerusalem. He said, "They will crush
16 you to the ground, you and your children within you,
17 and they will not leave within you one stone upon
18 another" (Luke 19:44). That's when it started to get
19 personal.

20 REPORTER: I can imagine.

21 STONE: He said this would happen because the people of
22 Jerusalem did not recognize the time of their visitation.

23 REPORTER: What did he mean by that?

24 STONE: I'm not really sure. Maybe he was saying they
25 would have had a chance if they only believed in him.

26 REPORTER: I thought you said they *did* believe in him. The
27 crowds called him a king.

28 STONE: Yes, but he wasn't the kind of king they were
29 looking for. Riding in on a donkey was only the
30 beginning. He never picked up a sword. He never
31 organized an army. He never launched an assault
32 against the Romans. That donkey was as close to a war
33 horse as he ever got.

34 REPORTER: What happened to this "king"?

35 STONE: He didn't fare so well. Five days later there was

1 another procession of people along my road, this time
 2 coming out of the city. In the middle of it was Jesus.
 3 This time he was on foot, carrying a cross. The only
 4 crown he wore was a crown of thorns. The crowds
 5 weren't cheering him; they were jeering him. They said,
 6 "If you are a king, why don't you save yourself?" (Luke
 7 23:37, author's paraphrase).

8 **REPORTER:** Didn't his followers try to protect him?

9 **STONE:** He told them not to. I heard that when he was
 10 arrested, a couple of them pulled out swords — but he
 11 made them put their weapons away.

12 **REPORTER:** You mean he intentionally let the soldiers take
 13 him?

14 **STONE:** That's how it appears. It was as if he expected it, as
 15 if it had to be that way.

16 **REPORTER:** Why?

17 **STONE:** It was for him the way of peace.

18 **REPORTER:** The way of peace?

19 **STONE:** Yeah. I know it sounds strange. Most of the kings
 20 who passed down my road claimed to bring peace, but
 21 they did it, or tried to do it, by creating a single world
 22 empire that would end fighting between nations. *Pax*
 23 *Romana*, the Romans called it. But their unity was the
 24 unity of dictatorship, and their "peace" was established
 25 with a sword. It never lasted very long. Eventually the
 26 resentments, hatred, and desire for freedom of
 27 conquered peoples tore those empires apart. *(Pause)*
 28 There has to be another way.

29 **REPORTER:** You think peace on earth can be brought by a
 30 king on a donkey who is executed on a cross?

31 **STONE:** If peace cannot be brought with a sword, perhaps it
 32 must be bought with a sacrifice.

33 **REPORTER:** But how can he be a king if he is rejected by
 34 his own people?

35 **STONE:** There is another passage in that psalm I told you

1 about earlier: Psalm 118, verses 22 and 23. It is my
2 favorite passage in the Bible.

3 **REPORTER:** What does it say?

4 **STONE:** “The stone that the builders rejected has become
5 the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing; it is
6 marvelous in our eyes.” Isn’t that a great passage?

7 **REPORTER:** I can see why you like it.

8 **STONE:** Sometimes the true value of a thing is not always
9 apparent at first glance. When the crowd of his
10 followers led Jesus into the city, they shouted, “Blessed
11 is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in
12 heaven, and glory in the highest!” (Luke 19:38). Maybe
13 they were right, but in a way they did not yet
14 understand.

15 **REPORTER:** Do you understand it?

16 **STONE:** I don’t know. But maybe his death is not the last
17 word. The stone which the builders rejected has
18 become the chief cornerstone. If it can happen with
19 rocks, maybe it can also happen with people.

20 **REPORTER:** Do you have anything else to share?

21 **STONE:** Since I met him, I have a new favorite song. Want to
22 guess what it is?

23 **REPORTER:** “Rock of Ages”?

24 **STONE:** Nice try, but no. It’s “My Hope Is Built on Nothing
25 Less.”

26 **REPORTER:** Why is that?

27 **STONE:** It’s because of the chorus:

28 “On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
29 All other ground is sinking sand,
30 All other ground is sinking sand.”

31

32

33 *NOTE: The numerals running vertically down the left margin of each*
34 *page of dialogue are for the convenience of the director. With*
35 *these, he/she may easily direct attention to a specific passage.*



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