

COME TO CHRIST, THE LIVING STONE

1 PETER 02:04–08

Introduction

This is a picture of the great house that God is building, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are three pictures painted.

- I. Picture 1: Christ is the Living Stone; He was rejected by men, but chosen by God (v. 4).
- II. Picture 2: believers are living stones (vv. 5-6).
- III. Picture 3: unbelievers are disobedient builders (vv. 7-8).

I. 1 Peter 02:04 Jesus Christ, The Chief Cornerstone

There is the first picture — Jesus Christ is the Living Stone. How can a stone be living? It cannot. This is simply a picture of how God looks at Christ and His followers: they are like a building that is being built by God Himself. The foundation of God's building is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. If a person wants to be a part of God's building, he has to place his life upon the foundation Stone, Christ Himself. But note what this verse says: the living stone was rejected by men. When men looked at the Stone (Christ)...

- it was not wanted.
- it did not fit in with their plans.
- it was useless and unsuitable for what they were building.
- it was not worth the price.

Men rejected Christ because they wanted to build their lives like they wanted. They wanted to do their own thing. Therefore, they cast the Stone of God aside. But note: the stone has been chosen of God. It is the very stone that God has chosen to be the foundation stone for life. It is the only stone that can support and bear the weight of life. And note: the stone chosen by God is a living stone. What does this mean? God is eternal; hence, the building of God will last forever and ever. Therefore, the cornerstone laid by God is bound to be eternal; it shall never deteriorate or waste away. The cornerstone is living and shall exist forever and ever.

The symbolism of the living cornerstone says three significant things.

1. The living cornerstone is the first stone laid. All other stones are placed after it. It is the *preeminent* stone in time. So it is with Christ; He is *the first* of God's new movement.

=> Christ is the author of salvation. All others are the readers of the story.

Heb 2:10 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Heb 12:2 *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

=> Christ is the source of eternal salvation, of our faith. All others are the recipients of His promises.

Heb 5:9 *And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

=> Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, *beginning and the end*. All others come after Him and are under Him.

Rev 1:8 *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”* (cp. 21:6; 22:13).

=> Christ is the forerunner, one who went before us into the very presence of God. All others enter God’s presence after Him.

Heb 6:19-20 *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.*

2. The cornerstone is the supportive stone. All other stones are placed upon it and held up by it. They all rest upon it. It is the preeminent stone in position and power. So it is with Christ; He is the support and power, the Foundation of God’s new movement.

=> Christ is *the Head cornerstone*, the only true foundation upon which man can build. All crumble who are not laid upon Him.

1 Cor 3:11 *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

=> Christ is *the chief cornerstone* upon which all others are joined together. All who wish to be joined together have to be laid upon Him.

Eph 2:20-22 *Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

=> Christ is *the living Stone* upon which all others have to be built if they wish to live and be a part of God’s spiritual house. All others have to be built upon Him if they wish to live and have their spiritual sacrifice accepted by God.

1 Pet 2:4-5 *As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

3. The living Stone is the stone to which men must come if they are to become a part of God's building. It is to Christ that we must come. No one can be a part of God's building unless he places himself upon the foundation stone laid by God. God accepts no one who refuses to become a part of His building. And God is just like all builders; He has a foundation upon which all workers must lay the stones of their lives.

Mat 7:24-27 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

1 Cor 2:11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

2 Tim 2:19 Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

II. 1 Peter 02:05-06 Believers are Living Stones

There is the second picture — believers are living stones. Remember: God is eternal which means that His building is eternal. The Foundation Stone laid by Hun shall never decay nor waste away. Christ lives forever and ever. Therefore, when we place our lives upon the living stone of God, the living stone supports and holds us up eternally. We become living stones, stones that shall exist forever and ever. Note three significant facts.

1. Believers are being built into a spiritual house (v. 5). This is a picture of the church that God is building all over the earth. It includes all believers of all generations. It is a picture of what is called the universal church or universal temple of God. Note that God's house is a *spiritual house*. What does this mean? It means that God's house is spiritual as opposed to physical. A physical house is not permanent; it ages, deteriorates and wastes away. But not God's spiritual house. The spiritual world or dimension is the real world, the world that is permanent and eternal. Therefore, the spiritual house of God does not age, deteriorate or decay. This means two wonderful things.
 - a. First, when we turn to God and lay our lives upon the foundation stone of Christ, we become a part of God's spiritual house. We shall never die or waste away, but we shall live permanently, forever and ever in God's spiritual and eternal house.
 - b. Second, there are many stones who are going to live forever with us. It takes many stones to build a great building, and the same is true of God's spiritual house. We are only one of many who are being placed into God's great spiritual house. The point is this:

there is no room for pride, arrogance, envy, jealousy, criticism, backbiting, anger, accusations, discrimination, prejudice or wrath among God's building; no room for a stone to become puffed up over another stone.

All living stones are needed in God's house. In fact, the house cannot be completed unless there are enough stones to build it. There is a place for all of us, and we are going to exist together forever. Therefore, we are to place ourselves and take our place in the house of God. We are to place ourselves right where we belong and do our part in holding up the building. We are not to seek the place or position or function of any other stone. We are not to weaken the building to any degree.

Thought 1. William Barclay tells a story from Sparta and then drives the point home with a striking application.

“There is a famous story from Sparta. A Spartan king boasted to a visiting monarch about the walls of Sparta. The visiting monarch looked around and he could see no walls. He said to the Spartan king, ‘Where are these walls about which you speak and boast so much?’ The Spartan king pointed at his bodyguard of magnificent Spartan troops. ‘These,’ he said, ‘are the walls of Sparta, and every man of them a brick.’

“Now, the point is quite clear. So long as a brick lies by itself it is useless. It only becomes of use when it is built into a building. That is why it was made; and it is in being built into a building that it realizes its function and the reason for its existence. It is so with the individual Christian. To realize his destiny he must not remain alone, but must be built into the fabric and edifice of the Church” (The Letters of James and Peter, p. 231).

2. Believers are a holy priesthood (v. 5). The chief function of the priest is to stand between God and men, to represent men before God and to present men to God. Man has just never felt worthy enough to approach God; he has usually felt that God was so far away that he could never reach God. Therefore, man has felt the need for priests to carry his case before God.

The point to note is man's thoughts about God, how far away he thinks God is — so far away that man needs a priest, some godly person to represent him before God. But note the Scripture: believers are being built up as an holy priesthood. Every single believer now stands before God as a priest. He can now approach God on his own. God is not far off and removed from man. Any person who turns to God and lays his life upon the foundation of Christ becomes a part of God's spiritual house. That person is in the very house of God itself. He can talk and share with God whenever he chooses. He can worship and praise God and cry out for God's help and deliverance any time he wishes. The believer himself is now a priest before God. (See *Priest*, 1 Pet. 2:9.)

Thought 1. The priesthood of the believer is one of the great teachings of Scripture. Just imagine! We stand before God as a priest, as one who has access into God's presence any time of any day. There is no reason whatsoever why we should ever be overcome by any problem or trouble in this life. We are in the house of God. We can approach Him anytime and receive whatever we need to meet the demands of life: wisdom, provision, resource or strength.

Now note why we are made priests before God: that we might offer spiritual sacrifices to God. In the past men have brought their sacrifices to priests and had the priests present their sacrifices to God. But now believers themselves are made priests for this very purpose: that they might offer up their own sacrifices to God. Men are now to bring their own offerings and sacrifices to God. They themselves are now the priests in the house of God. However, note a critical point: their sacrifices are made acceptable only by Jesus Christ. A person has to have his life lying upon the foundation of Christ. He must be trusting and believing in the support and power of Christ to make him a part of God's house. The only sacrifices that God accepts are the sacrifices made within His house. Scripture says that the believer is to make the following sacrifices.

=> He is to sacrifice his body as a living sacrifice to God. He is not to conform any longer to this world.

Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

Luke 14:27 "And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

Rom 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Gal 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Phil 2:17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.

2 Tim 4:6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.

=> He is to sacrifice his life to God as he walks day by day. He is to follow God in love, even as Christ loved us and gave Himself as an offering and a sacrifice to God.

***Eph 5:1-2** Be imitators of God. therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

***1 John 3:16** This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

=> He is to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.

***Heb 13:15** Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name.*

***Psa 107:22** Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.*

***Psa 116:17** I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD.*

***Jer 33:11** The sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD, saying, “Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good; his love endures forever.” For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before, says the LORD.*

***Jonah 2:9** “But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the LORD.”*

=> He is to offer the sacrifices of good works and gifts and money.

***Heb 13:16** And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

***Luke 12:33** “Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”*

***Acts 20:35** “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

***Rom 12:13** Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

***Gal 6:6-10** Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not*

give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

1 Tim 6:18 *Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*

=> He is to offer spiritual sacrifices, that is, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

1 Pet 2:5 *You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

Gal 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Psa 4:5 *Offer right sacrifices and trust in the LORD.*

=> He is to sacrifice his life in order to lead people to faith in Christ.

Phil 2:16-17 *As you hold out the word of life — in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour for nothing. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.*

Mat 4:19 *“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”*

John 4:35 *“Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”*

1 Cor 9:19-23 *Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law, so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law, so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.*

Psa 126:6 *He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.*

3. Believers are a fulfilment of prophecy (v. 6. Cp. Psa. 118:22; Isa. 28:16.) The prediction that the Messiah would be the chief or chosen cornerstone of God’s building was made centuries before Christ ever came into the world. Note the four great things predicted:

=> That God Himself would lay the cornerstone. God Himself would send the Messiah into the world and use Him as the foundation of God’s eternal house.

- => That God would select or elect Him to be the cornerstone. There would be plenty of philosophies, religions and ideas about how to best build a world and life for man. But God would choose only one foundation stone for the world and life: Jesus Christ.
- => That God would count His foundation stone precious. The stone selected by Him would be the most precious thing in all the universe: it would be His very own Son. He would choose His own Son to become the Foundation Stone for men's lives and for the eternal world God was planning. There is nothing in the world that is any more precious to God than His own dear Son. Therefore, God would count Him precious, the only thing precious enough to serve as the Foundation Stone for the eternal house of God.
- => That believers would not be put to shame (*kataischunthei*), that is, confounded, disappointed and confused. Believing and trusting in Jesus Christ — leaning upon him and building upon Him — is the only way to keep from being eternally confused, shamed and disappointed.

The point is this: believers — their salvation in Christ — are the fulfilment of this prophecy. God predicted that He would be building a spiritual and eternal house for believers. He laid the foundation when He sent Christ into the world, and believers have been laying the stones of their lives upon Christ ever since. How? By believing in Him, that is, by laying their lives upon Him or by building upon Him. The result has been phenomenal: those who have built upon Christ have experienced a most wonderful thing. All the confusion, shame and disappointment in this life and the fear of judgment in the next life have disappeared. Believers are now flooded with life, a life that just overflows with love, joy, peace, victory and triumph and with confidence and assurance that all things shall be well in the future.

John 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 3:15-16 That everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Rom 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

III. 1 Peter 02:07-08 Unbelievers, Disobedient Builders

The third picture — unbelievers are pictured as disobedient builders. Christ has done so much for man, He should be the most precious thing in a man's life. But the greatest tragedy in all of history is that He is not considered to be precious by some people. He is to believers, but they are a small minority of people. The vast, vast majority of people are unbelievers. They just do not believe that Jesus Christ is the foundation stone for their lives. The four points of the Scripture state it well.

1. Unbelievers disqualify and reject the stone. They look at the various foundation stones of life and...
 - they do not want the Stone [Christ].
 - they do not think that the Stone will fit in with their plans.
 - they do not believe the Stone [Christ] will suit what they are building.
 - they do not believe the Stone [Christ] is worth the price. They just do not think the Stone [Christ] is worth all they are and have.

The point is forceful: they reject and disqualify the stone. They do not want Christ enough to give all they are and have in order to get him.

2. Christ is made the Head of the corner anyway. Despite the rejection of men, Christ is made the cornerstone of the only permanent and lasting building. God selected and elected Him despite man. And if man is to become a part of an eternal house that lasts forever and that brings an abundance of life, he has to lay his life upon the foundation of Christ.
3. Unbelievers stumble over the stone of Christ. He is a rock that makes them fall. What does this mean? When people look at Jesus Christ, they stumble over Him; they do not understand...
 - how He could be anything other than a man just like the rest of us.
 - how He could be born of a virgin, God incarnate in human flesh.
 - how He could live a sinless life, live without committing a single sin.
 - how His death could be any more than the death of a martyr who died for a great cause.
 - how His resurrection is anything but a tall tale made up by His followers to secure more and more followers.

Simply stated, many people do not understand nor believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He was sent into the world by God to save men; that He was able to live a sinless life because He was the God-Man who had come to earth for that very purpose; that He died and arose from the dead as the Perfect and Ideal Man so that His ideal death and resurrection could cover man.

People just stumble over the facts or else they fall because Christ lays the burden of total commitment upon man. After all, if Jesus Christ is truly who He claimed to be, we owe Him our lives — all that we *are and have*. Most men are not willing to give up the right to their lives and property. They fall at this demand of Christ. Therefore, they stumble over Him. But note:

=> to stumble means that we have tripped up and fallen, that we damage ourselves.

=> to fall means that we hurt ourselves.

4. Note another fact: what we are stumbling over. We are actually stumbling over the message, the very Word of God itself. What is so awful about this? The Word of God is the only incorruptible, imperishable seed on earth that lives and stands forever (cp. 1 Pet. 1:23-25). If we reject the glorious gospel of God's Word, the glorious gospel that Jesus Christ is the Foundation Stone of God's building, then we are rejecting the only hope of living forever. We are appointing ourselves to a state of unbelief and disobedience to God. That is, we are steeping ourselves in more and more unbelief and becoming harder and harder to the gospel. We are living lives that are becoming more and more disobedient.

***Luke 22:67** "If you are the Christ, " they said, "tell us." Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me."*

***John 3:11** "I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony."*

***John 3:16-18** "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."*

***John 3:36** "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."*

***John 8:24** "I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."*

***John 12:37** Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.*

***Heb 3:12** See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.*

***Heb 4:11** Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.*

***Jer 6:15** "Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them," says the LORD. ■*