

CORNERSTONE, STUMBLINGSTONE

1 Peter 2:6-8

INTRODUCTION

- Every person is building their life on a foundation of some sort
- There are man-made foundations of humanism, atheism, naturalism, false religions – these will eventually crumble and destroy those who build on them
- Then there is the foundation of Jesus Christ – this will stand forever and eternally support those who build on him
- There is a reason why the world is in the mess it is in, why evil is rampant, why people are miserable and without hope – it is because the world has rejected Jesus Christ
- Yet there is also a reason why, in this dark and depraved world, there are small groups of people who have joy and peace, who walk in love and kindness towards others, and who possess an assurance of life beyond the grave – it is because these people have received Jesus Christ
- Last week we studied vv.4-5 and saw how the church is likened to the temple God, built on the foundation of Christ, while the members form the building itself, as living stones
- Those members of the church are priests, having access to God through Christ, and are to offer spiritual sacrifices to God, which are made acceptable by Jesus Christ
- Today we are considering vv.6-8, where Christ is presented as the chief corner stone, chosen by God, and how our eternal felicity or misery hinges on whether we trust in this stone, or reject him

I. HE IS THE SUPREME STONE OF THE FATHER (6)

A. Peter references the prophet Isaiah and his prophecies of Christ

1. Verse 8 is from Isaiah 8:14-15

- a. The northern kingdom of Israel had joined forces with Syria against Assyria
- b. Judah did not join Israel and Syria, therefore Israel and Syria turned against Judah
- c. Isaiah exhorted Ahaz, king of Judah, to trust in the Lord
- d. But Ahaz was a wicked king, and rather than trusting in God, he sought help from Assyria
- e. God reasoned with Isaiah to not join the confederacy with Assyria but to trust in the Lord (8:11-13)
- f. In v.14 God shows that he will be a sanctuary to those who trust in him, but a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to both Israel and Judah if they oppose his counsels

2. Verse 6 is from Isaiah 28:16

- a. Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, was now king
- b. He was righteous, yet many of the leaders in Jerusalem maintained the ways of Ahaz (“scornful men”), who are warned from v.14, for thinking they had made a covenant or agreement with death, that death should not come to them

- c. But in v.16, God shows the true way of life and salvation through the foundation stone that he laid, which is clearly the Messiah.
3. The choice that God put before Judah is the same that is put before all of us – will we trust in ourselves, in feeble human strength to deliver us from death? Or will we trust in God's sure foundation of Jesus Christ?

B. The stone of Christ is laid in *Sion*

1. Sion/Zion is God's eternal kingdom, which includes the earthly city of Jerusalem, from which the Messiah will reign for 1000 years, but finds its ultimate realisation in the heavenly New Jerusalem, the abode of God, and the eternal dwelling place of the redeemed (Revelation 21)
2. This Sion is the place where even now Christ is preparing for his people to dwell in (John 14:2)
3. Sion is the place of security and permanence, as it is God's city

C. A chief corner stone

1. There are various ways this word can be understood
 - a. A cornerstone placed at the base of one corner, from which the rest of the structure is aligned, both horizontally and vertically, and upon which the building rests
 - b. A keystone in an arch which completes the arch and holds the building together
 - c. A capstone or final stone on top of the building which completes it and holds the highest place

2. The cornerstone indicates pre-eminence (Colossians 1:18)
3. The cornerstone indicates strength and stability
4. The cornerstone indicates beauty
5. The Cornerstone indicates unity (Ephesians 2:20-21)
6. The cornerstone indicates prominence

D. Christ is God's elect

1. Elect means "chosen", used also in verses 4 and 9
2. The Scriptures frequently refer to the Messiah as the Lord's chosen (Isaiah 42:1; Matthew 12:18; Luke 23:35)
3. Note that it is God the Father who chooses and has laid the chief corner stone of Christ

E. Christ is precious to God

1. "Precious" (*entimos*) means honoured, costly, prized, dear
2. Isaiah uses the word "tried", indicating passing the tested and proven
3. Christ, the only begotten of the Father, from eternity, is one with the Father, and "is in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18)
4. The Father declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 17:5)
5. Now, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9-11)

II. HE IS THE SALVATION STONE OF THE BELIEVER (6-7)

A. Those who believe on Christ shall not be confounded

1. The word for “confounded” (*kataischunō*) means humiliated, dishonoured, disgraced, ashamed
2. It describes a defeated army in hasty retreat, fearful and fleeing for their lives
3. This is the state of the unrepentant when God’s wrath is poured out (Revelation 6:15-17; 9:6; Daniel 12:2)
4. *Put all your trust in Jesus, for you will never have cause to regret doing so. The text, in the Old Testament, from which Peter quoted, says, “He that believeth shall not make haste;” he shall not need to be in a hurry, he shall enjoy the holy leisure which springs from a quiet confidence where confidence ought to be placed. O beloved, stay yourselves on Christ! Rest your whole weight on him, for then, “you shall not be confounded.”* (Spurgeon)

B. He is precious to the believer

1. Note the word precious is used in verses 4,6,7
2. What is precious to God should be precious to us
3. The Scriptures describe numerous things that are precious
 - a. The redemption of the soul (Psalm 49:8)
 - b. The death of God's saints (Psalm 116:15)
 - c. The seed of the Word of God (Psalm 126:6)
 - d. God's thoughts toward His children (Psalm 139:17)

- e. The lips of knowledge (Proverbs 20:15)
 - f. The trial of our faith (1 Peter 1:7)
 - g. The blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:19)
 - h. Jesus Christ, the precious corner stone (Isaiah 28:16)
4. One sure proof of genuine faith is that Christ is the most precious thing to you, far above all other things

III. HE IS THE STUMBLING STONE OF THE UNBELIEVER (7-8)

- A. To the unbeliever, the corner stone becomes a stumbling stone
- 1. “Rock of offense” (*skandalon*) describes a rock that one might trip over and become injured and entrapped
 - 2. Christ “is set for the fall and rising again of many” (Luke 2:34)
- B. They stumble at the word in disobedience
- 1. This is the great sin of man that brings the eternal wrath of God upon them – rejecting the gospel message, and refusing to obey its demands of repentance and faith
 - 2. God’s words to Samuel apply to man’s rejection of Christ in every generation: “they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:7)
 - 3. Man says, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14)

4. When Pilate gave the people a choice, they chose a murderer over Christ (John 18:40)
5. The world hates Jesus Christ (John 15:18,23-24)
6. They hate Christ because they love their sin (John 3:19)
7. What man loves, God hates; what God loves, man hates (Luke 16:15)

C. They are appointed to judgment

1. The “appointing” of God here does not apply to their disobedience, but rather to the *penalty* of their disobedience
2. All who do not receive Christ as Saviour are destined to face him as Judge
3. They stumble at the gospel, and on the day of judgment they will stumble into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15)

CONCLUSION

1. The most critical question a person must face is that which Pilate asked, “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?” (Matthew 27:22)
2. The Jews responded to Pilate, “Let him be crucified”, and many today join with them in spirit and crucify him afresh by repudiating his grace (cf. Hebrews 6:6)
3. Yet Psalm 2 shows the final doom of those who oppose the Lord and his Anointed
4. The instruction at the close of Psalm 2 shows the only way to escape the wrath of God:

5. “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” (Psalm 2:10-12)
6. Is Jesus Christ your foundation?
7. And is Jesus Christ truly precious to you?
8. If Christ is truly precious to me:
 - ✓ I commune with him in prayer
 - ✓ I meditate upon his word
 - ✓ I unite with his people
 - ✓ I sing his praises
 - ✓ I preach him to others
 - ✓ I obey him in my life