

(Continued from sermon 15)

## 7. The Covenant with the Church

Matthew 16:13-19 (TLB):

<sup>13</sup> *When Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who are the people saying I am?"*

<sup>14</sup> *"Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; some, Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."*

<sup>15</sup> *Then he asked them, "Who do you think I am?"*

<sup>16</sup> *Simon Peter answered, "The Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*

<sup>17</sup> *"God has blessed you, Simon, son of Jonah," Jesus said, "for my Father in heaven has personally revealed this to you—this is not from any human source.*

<sup>18</sup> *You are Peter, a stone; and upon this rock I will build my church;<sup>1</sup> and all the powers of hell shall not prevail against it.*

<sup>19</sup> *And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; whatever doors you lock on earth shall be locked in heaven; and whatever doors you open on earth shall be open in heaven!"<sup>2</sup>*

Verse 14 tells us what the people thought, which more often than not has little factual value. People will give you an opinion on almost any subject and even pretend to believe it is true, but the real truth about almost anything can only come by a completely unbiased investigation of the facts. The majority of people want to believe in something that fits their preconceived ideas. When we come to the subject of Jesus no one can come to faith in Him without the power of the Holy Spirit of God. The truth be told, most people don't know what they're talking about because they don't research the material thoroughly enough to determine what is true, and they will even manipulate what they know to be fact in order to accommodate what they want to believe. So here say is worthless.

Now before we get into this covenant any further it is necessary that we have a clear understanding of the term "*cornerstone*."

A **corner-stone** is a block of great importance in binding together the sides of a building. The word "*corner-stone*" is sometimes used to denote some person of rank and importance. Jesus was appointed by God to the highest position of honor. He is also styled "*the chief corner stone*." When Zechariah (10:4), speaking of Judah, says, "*From them will come the **Cornerstone**,*" he is referring to the Messiah as the "**corner-stone**."<sup>3</sup>

Isaiah 28:16 (TLB):

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<sup>1</sup> "You are Peter [Greek, *Petros*—a large piece of rock], and on this rock [Greek, *petra*—a huge rock like Gibraltar] I will build My church." *Amplified Bible*.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew George Easton, "Corner," in *Illustrated Bible Dictionary: And Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature*, (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1897), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Corner".

<sup>16</sup> *But the Lord God says, "See, I am placing a Foundation Stone in Zion—a firm, tested, precious Cornerstone that is safe to build on. He who believes need never run away again.*

Psalm 118:22-23 (NASB):

<sup>22</sup> *The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone.*

<sup>23</sup> *This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.*

Matthew 21:42 (NASB):

<sup>42</sup> *Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, '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'?"*

Ephesians 2:11-22 (NASB):

<sup>11</sup> *Therefore remember that formerly you, **the Gentiles** (non-Jews) in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision (Jews)," which is performed in the flesh by human hands—*

<sup>12</sup> *remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*

<sup>13</sup> *But **now in Christ Jesus** you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

<sup>14</sup> *For He Himself is our peace, who **made both groups into one** and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,*

<sup>15</sup> *by abolishing in His flesh the enmity (hatred), which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, **thus establishing peace,***

<sup>16</sup> *and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.*

<sup>17</sup> *AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;*

<sup>18</sup> *for **through Him** we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.*

<sup>19</sup> *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,*

<sup>20</sup> *having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the **corner stone,***

<sup>21</sup> *in whom **the whole building,** being fitted together, **is growing into a holy temple** in the Lord,*

<sup>22</sup> *in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

Zechariah 10:1-4 (TLB):

<sup>1</sup> *Ask the Lord for rain in the springtime, and he will answer with lightning and showers. Every field will become a lush pasture.*

<sup>2</sup> *How foolish to ask the idols for anything like that! Fortune-tellers' predictions are all a bunch of silly lies; what comfort is there in promises that don't come*

*true? Judah and Israel have been led astray and wander like lost sheep; everyone attacks them, for they have no shepherd to protect them.*

<sup>3</sup> *“My anger burns against your ‘shepherds’—your leaders—and I will punish them—these goats. For the Lord Almighty has arrived to help his flock of Judah. I will make them strong and glorious like a proud steed in battle.*

<sup>4</sup> *From them will come the **Cornerstone**, the Peg on which all hope hangs, the Bow that wins the battle, **the Ruler over all the earth.***

Jesus is the cornerstone, a critical piece necessary to hold the entire structure together. The stone at the corner of two walls that unites them; specifically, **the stone built into one corner of the foundation** of an edifice as the actual or nominal starting point of a building?<sup>4</sup>

Job 38:6 (HCSB):

<sup>6</sup> *What supports its foundations? Or who laid its cornerstone?*

Isaiah 28:16 (HCSB):

<sup>16</sup> *Therefore the Lord GOD said “Look, **I have laid a stone in Zion** [Jerusalem], a tested stone, **a precious cornerstone**, a sure foundation; the one who believes will be unshakable.*

“A stone for a corner” (Jeremiah 51:26; it would appear that cornerstones were placed in different positions as regards elevation). The expressions “*the chief corner stone*” (Psalm 118:22; “*capstone*” in NIV) and the “*top stone*” (Zech. 4:7; “*capstone*” in NIV) seem to warrant the conclusion that the “*cornerstone*” is **a term equally applicable to the chief stone at the top and that in the foundation.**<sup>5</sup>

**Figurative.** The term “*cornerstone*” is sometimes used to denote any principal person, such as the princes of Egypt (Isaiah 19:13). Christ is called the “*corner stone*” in reference to **His being the foundation of the Christian faith** (Ephesians 2:20) and the importance and conspicuousness of the place He occupies (Matthew 21:42; 1 Peter 2:6).<sup>6</sup>

Hopefully by now you’re beginning to see that there are more than enough references in Scripture identifying Jesus being the essential part of the Church, the cornerstone, without which the Church could not be built. The rest of the foundation stones could include the apostles and then all who come to believe in Christ as Savior, one stone upon another to form the Temple of God.

The apostles and prophets are said to be the foundation of the Church upon which all future believers or “living stones” are built.

<sup>4</sup> Op Cit., Unger.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

1 Peter 2:5-6 (HCSB):

<sup>5</sup> *You yourselves, as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

<sup>6</sup> *For it is contained in Scripture: Look! I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and honored cornerstone, and the one who believes in Him will never be put to shame!*

Jesus Christ is said to be the chief cornerstone. He is the only One on which the Church can be guaranteed to survive. Peter was just a man and no man could ever insure the Church's survival and ultimate victory. The picture is very clear. From the human perspective, the apostles and prophets work and build the Church and upon their work and effort the Church depends. From God's perspective, Christ's power and work establishes the Church (cp. 1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Peter 2:4-8; see note—Matthew 16:19).

Peter was the one who began the Church at the direction of Christ and he and the other apostles committed their lives to building the Church in Jesus name. He was the early leader of the Church at Pentecost when three thousand believers were saved (Acts 2:41) and at Caesarea when salvation was opened to the Gentiles (Matthew 10:1f). Therefore, he was the rock and the foundation in that he was the first man who ever opened the doors of the church to both Jew and Gentile.<sup>7</sup>

“I got a ticket for speeding and had to go to traffic school. In the defensive driving part, they created a scenario: "You're stopped at a stop sign. You look in your rear-view mirror and see a car careening toward you that you realize is going to rear-end you. What should you do?" Almost everybody in the class said you should keep your feet off the brake, so that when that car hits you, you would go forward, absorbing some of the shock.

That was the wrong answer!

We were told: Put your brake on as tight as you can and brace yourself for that collision. If your car is rigid and braced—if it's on its foundation, in other words—then when that horizontal pressure hits, there will be less damage to your car and to the occupants. If your car is not braked, you get the whiplash effect.

I thought to myself, *What our Lord has said is that when our lives are anchored into the rock—when we have found His faithfulness and His love, and we have made that the foundation of our life—then we're better able to handle the horizontal pressures of life.*<sup>8</sup>

Peter's confession, his expressed faith in Jesus, was the rock. Christ said, *"You are Peter and on this rock [I, Myself, the great truth of your confession] will I build my church."* There is no question that the Church was and is built upon Christ. He is without doubt the builder of the

<sup>7</sup> *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Matthew*, (Chattanooga: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 1991), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "XI. THE MESSIAH'S DRAMATIC REVELATION: HIS MESSIAHSHIP, HIS CHURCH AND HIS CROSS, \_\_Matthew\_\_ 16:13-17:27".

<sup>8</sup> Op Cit., *6,000 Plus Illustrations for Communicating Biblical Truths*, Under: "Trust".

Church and the power behind its structure. It is Jesus who takes every believer, all the "*living stones*," and places them into the structure of His church. "The Church depends upon Christ, not upon Peter nor any other man or combination of men." It was first built by Peter after Pentecost; but it is held together by Christ, **the only foundation**.<sup>9</sup>

Note the exact words spoken by Christ:

"My church;" (Matthew 16:18); The church is Christ's not man's.

"I will build." Christ builds the Church.

"The gates of Hell shall not prevail." Christ Himself protects the Church.

There does not appear to be anywhere in Scripture where the office of pope is authorized.

Here Peter functions as the foundation rock like the apostles and prophets in Ephesians 2:20-21. Jesus does not simply assign this role to Peter arbitrarily, however; Peter is the "rock" because here he confesses Jesus as the Christ (verses 15-16; Cullmann 1953:162; Ladd 1974b:110; C. Brown 1978:386). Others who share his proclamation also share his authority in building the church (Matthew 18:18 with Matthew 16:19).<sup>10</sup>

**Peter's confession in verse 16 is the foundation of the Church.** Christ then replied to Peter, "*You are Peter [petros] and on this rock [petra] I will build my church.*" I have come to the conclusion based on what the whole of Scripture says regarding this topic that the rock referred to here was Peter's confession. The "Rock," therefore is Jesus.

Peter was the first person who was able to identify Jesus for who He really was, the Messiah, the Son of God. Others had made similar confessions before (John 1:41, 45, 49; John 6:69), but they had not been with Jesus long enough to grasp what being "*the Son of God*" really meant. But now Peter understood more fully. Therefore, he was the first person, **the first rock (stone or brick)**, that was to be placed on the massive Rock that was to be the foundation on which the Church was to be built. There would be many others who would become these building stones (bricks) called "*living stones*" that would be added, and each stone would contribute to the building of God's Church.<sup>11</sup>

1 Peter 2:4-8 (HCSB):

<sup>4</sup> *Coming to Him, a **living stone**—rejected by men but chosen and valuable to God—*

<sup>5</sup> ***you yourselves, as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house** for a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

<sup>6</sup> *For it is contained in Scripture: Look! I lay a stone in Zion, **a chosen and honored cornerstone**, and the one who believes in Him will never be put to shame!*

<sup>7</sup> *So honor [will come] to you who believe, but for the unbelieving, The stone that*

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

*the builders rejected— this One has become the **cornerstone**,  
<sup>8</sup> and A stone to stumble over, and a rock to trip over. They stumble because they  
 disobey the message; they were destined for this.*

And again when Peter is addressing the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:8-12 (HCSB):

<sup>8</sup> Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them, “Rulers of the  
 people and elders:

<sup>9</sup> If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a disabled man—by  
 what means he was healed—

<sup>10</sup> 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 and whom God raised from the  
 dead—by Him **this man is standing here before you healthy.**

<sup>11</sup> This [Jesus]<sup>12</sup> is the stone rejected by you builders, which has become  
 the **cornerstone.**

<sup>12</sup> There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given  
 to people, and we must be saved by it.”

The following explanation is a direct quote from the *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – 1  
 & 2 Peter*, which contains a very good explanation of verse 4:

“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

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<sup>12</sup> Brackets mine.

deteriorate or waste away. The cornerstone is living and shall exist forever and ever.

- “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 *captain* of salvation. All others are crew members who follow Him (Hebrews 2:10).
- Christ is the *author* of eternal salvation, of our faith. All others are the readers of the story (Hebrews 5:9; 12:2).
- Christ is the *beginning and the ending*. All others come after Him and are under Him (Rev. 1:8; 21:6; 22:13).
- Christ is the *forerunner* into the very presence of God. All others enter God's presence after Him.”<sup>13</sup>

Peter does not suggest even for a moment that he is the rock on which the Church is built. Rather, he states clearly that the foundation stone is Jesus. Peter refers to Jesus as “*the living Stone*” on which those who believe are, “*like living stones*,” being built into a spiritual house or temple. Therefore, if others, like Peter himself, are to be called stones in any sense, **It is only because they have been built on Jesus, who is the actual foundation.**

Three Old Testament verses prove that what Peter said in Matthew 16:16 is true:

1) Isaiah 28:16 (CEV):

<sup>16</sup> *And so the LORD says, "I'm laying a firm foundation for the city of Zion [Jerusalem]<sup>14</sup>. It's a valuable ["precious" in the KJV] <sup>15</sup>cornerstone proven to be trustworthy; no one who trusts it will ever be disappointed.*

Jesus is the “*precious cornerstone*” of God's temple. The above verse is a prophecy (prediction) from God through Isaiah 700 years before it was fulfilled (758 to 698 B.C.)<sup>16</sup>.

In 1 Peter 2:4, Peter introduced the subject by referring to Jesus as one who had been “*rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him.*” Isaiah 28:16 reveals to us where he got two of those three ideas: (1) Jesus was “*chosen by God*,” and (2) he was “*precious*” to God. It also tells us how human beings are expected to relate to Jesus. **It is by faith**, for they are to “*trust in him.*” By believing in Jesus we are built into the Church God is constructing.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude*, (Chattanooga: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 1991), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "E. Come to Christ, the Living Stone, 2:4-8".

<sup>14</sup> Brackets mine.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary: Comprising Antiquities, Biography, Geography, Natural History, Archaeology and Literature*, (Philadelphia: A.J. Holman & Co., 1901), s.v. "Isaiah," WORDsearch CROSS e-book..

<sup>17</sup> Op Cit., *The Preacher's Outline*.