

UPWARD CALL

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim: to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead. I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God

IN KING JESUS.

(Philippians 3:13-14)

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Jesus—A Living Stone

For no man can lay ***a foundation*** other than the one which is laid, which is ***Jesus Christ***. (1 Corinthians 3:11 NASB [bold italic added])

Paul declared that there is no other foundation that can be laid, which is Jesus Christ, and we must build upon this foundation with that which is of the quality of gold, silver, and precious stones. However, we also must realize that Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews and a devout Pharisee of the nation of Israel (Philippians 3:5). Many of his brethren by blood refused to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the *Messiah of Israel*. As such, many of his brethren continued to build upon the teaching of Moses and rejected the very one that fulfills all that Moses gave the sons of Israel through the law of Mount Sinai. Even among his brethren who did believe in Jesus as Messiah, many continued to follow the traditions of the fathers, even the animal sacrifices and worship in the temple—meaning they had not fully converted to Christianity, but rather continued with a mixture of Judaism and Christianity. To release the Hebrew believers from Judaism and its religious ceremony, the Lord called forth the Roman army in 70 AD to destroy Jerusalem and the temple, and made biblical Judaism obsolete.

Today, some people believe that for the kingdom of God to come to this earth, the state of Israel that occupies land in the Middle East must build a temple in Jerusalem, reinstate the Levitical priesthood, and begin animal sacrifices that ended when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD. Can't be!

Those who hold this belief believe that Israel of our day is the favored nation of God, and yet, they are a people in unbelief, in apostasy. As a nation, they continue to reject Jesus as the Messiah. When He walked this earth, Jesus passed judgment upon them when He declared that *the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof* (Matthew 21:43). For over 2,000 years, they have been a barren nation. Today, they are a nation bearing only leaves but no fruit (Matthew 24:32). Even Jerusalem is no longer the desired place of the Lord. Jeremiah prophesied that the earthly Jerusalem would be broken like a potter's vessel, which could not be repaired; it would be buried in Topheth (*gehenna*) because there was no other place for burial (Jeremiah 19:11). True to God's word, the second temple and Jerusalem of that day was destroyed in 70 AD and has never been repaired or rebuilt to the former glory of the first temple under King Solomon, and it never will be. Why? Because God's temple was never meant to be perpetuated in a physical structure of inorganic stone. He has a new temple; His name is Jesus who did away with all animal sacrifices through His sacrifice and shed blood. Further, there is no longer a need for the Levitical priesthood because Jesus is of the order of Melchizedek, the king-priest of righteousness and peace (Hebrews 7:1-2), who is bringing forth a new priesthood of the same order. God's temple is now His Son and the many sons coming unto glory. Consequently, there is only one foundation upon which to build and bring forth the kingdom of God, and that foundation is none other than God's beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, let this one great truth sink deep into your heart and never allow it to be diluted or altered by those who seek to return to Judaism or any other form of religion.

Paul was not alone in regard to the one foundation, for Peter sounded a very similar theme.

To whom having approached [as to] **a living stone** [Christ], on the one hand having been rejected by people, on the other hand chosen [and] precious before God, and you yourselves, **as living stones**, are being built up [into] a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this reason, it is contained in the Scripture, "Look! **I lay in Zion a stone**, a cornerstone, chosen, precious [Christ], and the one believing on Him shall by no means be put to shame [or, be disappointed]." (1 Peter 2:4-6 ALT [bold italic added])

Peter quoted Isaiah the prophet.

Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, **I am laying in Zion a stone**, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed." (Isaiah 28:16 NASB [bold italic added])

Jesus is not only the foundation, but He is also the very cornerstone, which refers to a great stone that holds the building together. However, there is even more, as revealed through Zechariah the prophet.

Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. (Zechariah 4:7 KJV)

Jesus is the headstone, which also is referred to as the capstone or the top stone. This is a reference to the building of the great pyramids; the whole structure meets and culminates in the headstone.

Now, what do the foundation, the cornerstone and the headstone signify? They signify that Jesus is the entire structure, and He alone holds it together. He alone is the kingdom of God. Simply, you cannot remove Jesus from the building work of God and expect the kingdom of God to come to this earth.

The Jews rejected the stone, which became the cornerstone (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11), a rock over which they stumbled (Isaiah 8:14; 1 Peter 2:7-8). They failed to see that the very stone upon which the kingdom of God is built is the one they rejected—Jesus, the Son of God! **Jesus is a living stone**, and the building work of God is taking place in hearts of people, not in man-made structures. The kingdom of God is not built with inorganic stone that has no life. The Father is no longer interested in physical structures, even a temple, upon which to place His name and fill with His glory. Those structures are gone, having been made obsolete on the cross. His name and glory rest in His Son and in all who are in His Son. For God's people who believe on His Son, the one foundation of Jesus Christ has been laid in their hearts. This is where the building of the kingdom of God is occurring in our day. It is for this reason; Peter tells us to sanctify or to consecrate Christ as Lord in our heart.

But sanctify [consecrate] Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.... (1 Peter 3:15 NASB [WNT])

Jesus must be the Lord of our heart, which means that He must reign supreme in us. If we have given our heart over to Jesus, setting Him apart as Lord, then we are growing in the kingdom of God and will manifest as sons of glory in the age to come when the kingdom of the Son of God's love manifests to the nations. We, who are in Him, are living stones because Jesus is *the* living stone, and we are being built into a *spiritual house, a dwelling of God in spirit* (Ephesians 2:22).