

Text: 1 Pt 2.6-8

We completed our look at Acts 21 last Sunday. We leave Paul under arrest, standing on the staircase of the Castle of Antonia, preparing to speak to the mob in the temple court. We will give him a month and a half to clear his throat and begin.

Our Christmas series will start in two weeks.

Consequently, we have a two-week interlude, and I cast about wondering what should be our subject for these weeks. Nothing momentous came to mind — all I could think about was our ongoing Wednesday series in 1 Peter.

I decided we would make the next two weeks, “All Peter All the Time,” six messages in all.

We will carry on with Peter through December on Wednesday nights, so we won't lose any continuity this way.

I know some of you can't make it on Wednesday's. I hope you can at least pick up the live stream on occasion, or watch the videos along the way. Today finds us in the middle of a thought, the Corner Stone paragraph of 1 Peter 2.

Read 1 Pt 2.4-10, text 6-8 (afternoon 9-10)

Our last two Wednesdays covered vv. 4-5 — a brief summary:

Key term: *lithos not petros* (*Petros* = Peter, Simon Barjonah's nickname, means a stone, a rock, you find lying in a field; *lithos* = a cut stone, prepared for a purpose).

Lithos is the term used throughout this passage.

In vv. 1-2, God calls us to crave the sincere milk of the word, here he has us approaching the living stone (though men in general recoil at this)

In approaching the living stone, we become living stones, and he incorporates us in God's building, so that we can be a holy priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifices to him (our prayers, our deeds, our gifts, our bodies, our selves).

What spiritual sacrifices are you offering? What can you offer?

Which brings us to verse 6.

Our text today is full of OT quotations. They are foundational to the teaching in vv. 4-5.

Verse 6 opens with an unusual construction, not “thus saith the Lord,” or “it is written,” but “For *this* is contained in Scripture.”

For: a causal particle, giving us a reason for the difference the living stone makes in someone’s life.

this is contained: the unusual word, means, in a way, “have surrounded” — in Lk 5.9, it is used of Peter when it says, “For amazement had seized him” (or “astonishment had encompassed him”) — Peter was completely surrounded by astonishment at the amazing catch of fish.

Here, “it” is contained (surrounded) in Scripture ... **the thing Peter is teaching us has complete Scriptural support.**

Now, how does the Scripture support Peter’s teaching? Well, it talks a lot about a Stone. The Stone has an effect on people who encounter it, it shapes them spiritually. I’ve tried to compress that effect into our title:

Precious Stone or Stumbling Stone?

Proposition: God laid a cornerstone in Zion. Your alignment with that stone determines the course of your eternity.

I. God laid the stone in Zion

A. Without God’s act in laying the stone, nothing could happen

1. The word Peter uses speaks of deliberate action: there is nothing casual here
2. The quotation Peter uses comes from Isa 28.16

Isa 28.16 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.

3. Used by Paul in Romans 9.33

Rm 9.33 just as it is written, “BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”

Paul conflates two verses here, we’ll come back to the other OT quotes later.

4. In Isaiah, the Lord lays this stone in rebuke to the unbelieving rulers of Judah
5. Here the application is worldwide — this stone determines the destiny of all

B. The description of God's stone

Isaiah uses a few more terms, we will focus on Peter's

1. A reminder, this is the *lithos*, the cut stone, the prepared stone

2. The Choice Stone: "elect"

a. Also mentioned in v. 4

b. No ordinary stone, God the Master Builder, selected this one and this one only out of his quarry

3. The Precious Stone

a. Two meanings in lexicon

1) "pert. to being highly regarded because of status or personal quality, *honored, respected* ... [EITHER for rank / position OR intrinsic value]

2) "pert. to being esteemed as someth. of considerable worth, *valuable, precious*"¹

b. This is God's estimation, not necessarily man's estimation

c. Time proved God's valuation

4. The Corner Stone

a. We often think of the foundation when we think of the "stone" metaphor in Scripture

b. However, this word clearly refers to the Corner Stone

1) The Corner Stone isn't hidden, it sits at the base of the wall

2) It forms the dimensions of the building

¹ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

3) All other stones must line up with it, or they are rejected

In other words, God didn't lay the stone to fit you, he calls you to conform to his Corner Stone

II. The Stone is precious to those who believe

A. The key to lining up with the Corner Stone: faith ("he who believes in him")

"And, doubtless, no one can rightly believe, but he who is fully convinced that in Christ he ought wholly to trust."²

B. The effect of belief: no disappointment

1. In the KJV Isa 28.16 is trans, "he that believeth shall not make haste."
2. The Heb. here means lit. "not make haste" (alt. mng, "to be afraid) — thus the haste is due to fear
3. However, the LXX gives us the term "not disappointed" or "not ashamed"

"The meaning here is, that the man who believes shall not be agitated, or thrown into commotion, by fear of want or success; shall not be disappointed in his hopes; and, of course, he shall never be ashamed that he became a Christian."³

C. The one's believing value the cornerstone as God values the cornerstone

1. Lit. trans v. 7a: "therefore to you [it is] the precious, to the one's believing"
2. The Father honors this Stone
 - a. See v. 4

¹ Pt 2.4 ¶ And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and **precious** in the sight of God,

² John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Galaxie Software, 2002), 1 Pt 2.6.

³ Barnes, *Acts and Romans*, 219.

b. And see v. 6

^{1 Pt 2.6} For *this* is contained in Scripture: “BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A **PRECIOUS** CORNER *stone*, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”

3. And the believer says, “Amen! Precious he is to me.”

The man who puts his faith in the Corner Stone lines himself up with the stone.

- He compares himself to the stone.
- He gets his perspective from the stone.
- His rough edges get chipped off in conformity to the stone.

And all the while, the believer exalts the Stone and calls it Precious.

III. The Stone causes stumbling in those who don't believe

A. On the other hand... there are those who disbelieve

1. Perhaps they hear the gospel, and dismiss it
2. Perhaps they think, “there are many ways to God”
3. Or they say, “I don't need this stone, I won't line myself up with it — too narrow-minded and bigoted...”

B. This is the Stone the builders rejected

1. The builders were the rulers of Israel, the Sanhedrin
2. These men should have led the nation to God, not away from God
3. They rejected the Stone when it came to them: God made it the Corner Stone

^{Ps 118.22} The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner *stone*.

Jesus:

Mt 21.42 ¶ 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 ‘?

C. What happens when you reject the Stone?

The picture is of builders who cast the prepared *lithos* aside, leave it in the rubble of the building project

1. Unbelievers constantly stumble over this stone “a stone of stumbling”

“a stone to stumble over, such as would be any chance stone lying in the way. It is not true to say that Christ is everything or nothing, and can be taken or left; for to those who refuse belief He is a constant anomaly, meeting them in unexpected places and challenging their indifference. His own words, ‘He that is not with me is against me’ (Matt. 12:30), illustrate the truth”⁴

2. Instead of seeing him as precious, they see him as an offense, as a trap

D. Why do they reject the Stone?

1. They are disobedient
 - a. The remarkable thing is that their disobedience (unbelief) is a choice
 - b. When you stumble over a stone in the path, it is an accident
 - c. This stumbling is on purpose: they *will not* believe

I have seen men sneer at the message when I am preaching. They *would not* hear.

2. They are appointed to unbelief (“to this doom”)
 - a. A hard saying, gives the commentators fits

⁴ Selwyn, *1 Peter*, 164.

b. Consider Jn 3.18

Jn 3.18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

c. Consider: you are born to unbelief

- 1) You hear the message, you stumble
- 2) You might reject the message, you stumble on purpose
- 3) You keep stumbling, the message keeps popping up
- 4) Until somehow came the day when you fell on the stone in repentance and believed
- 5) And the stone became precious to you

Conclusion:

Proposition: God laid a cornerstone in Zion. Your alignment with that stone determines the course of your eternity.

Have you lined yourself up with God's Corner Stone? Are there any rough edges in your life? Time to chisel them off.

Are you still stumbling? Time to fall on the Stone in faith.