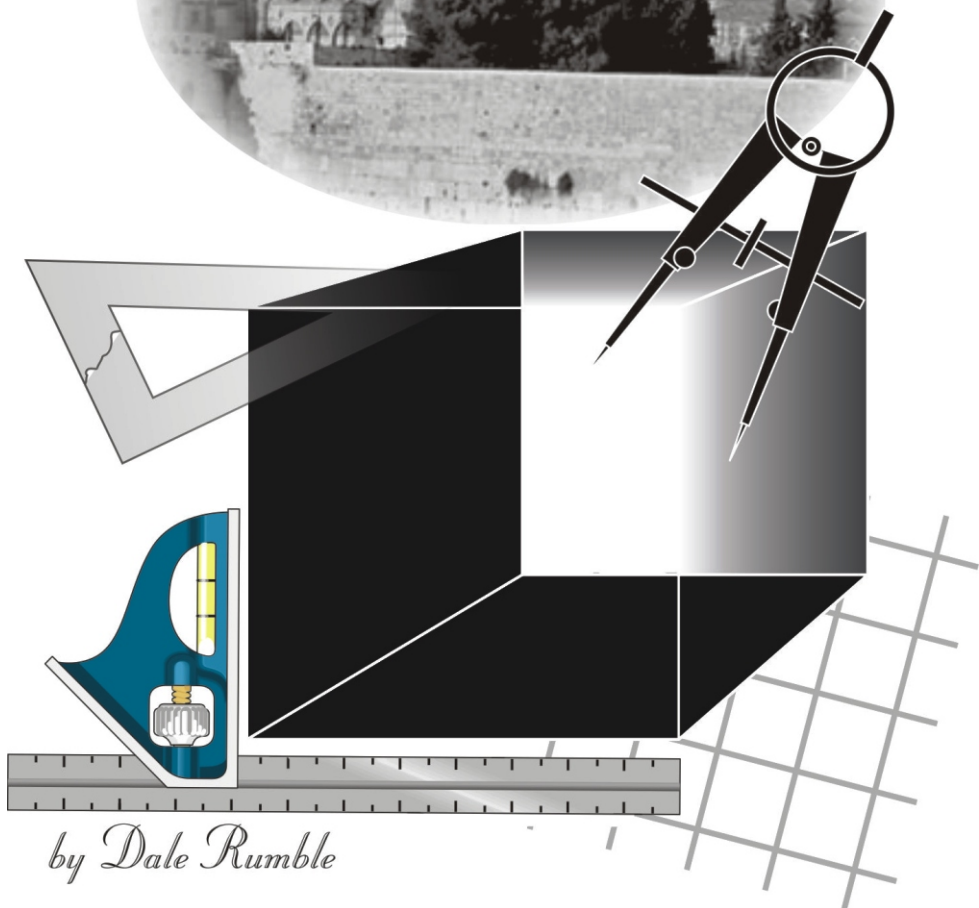


BUILDING ON GOD'S CORNERSTONE



by Dale Rumble

Building on God's Cornerstone

—*a resource for mentors*—

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Introduction

The most important accomplishment in mentoring Christian believers is to establish the centrality of Christ in their hearts. Many approaches in discipleship teach believers what to believe, what to do, and how to do it. The goal being to define their performance as disciples of Christ.

In contrast, biblical discipleship should seek to reveal the preeminent place that Christ has in the foundation that God has provided for His children. God Himself has firmly placed a precious, tested cornerstone for that foundation. It cannot be moved or replaced.

. . . 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)

The paramount truth of this foundation is that Christ is the cornerstone. Everything in our personal and collective lives is to be built upon Him¹. He is the source of all wisdom and knowledge.

Personal Responsibility

No matter how excellent the teaching is, no one can disciple us into Christ apart from our personal faith and obedi-

ence to God's word. Each believer is responsible to build his life on the cornerstone that God has laid for our salvation.

He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved! (Acts 4: 11-12)

The following verse reveals the responsibilities of both mentor and student, one in laying the proper foundation, and the other in building his (or her) life upon that foundation. The work of both will be tested by the fire of God, and each one will receive his reward according to his own labor.

*According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise masterbuilder, **I laid a foundation**, and another is building on it. But **each man must be careful how he builds on it** Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. (1 Corinthians 3:10-13)*

The issue in the above passage is not whether a person is saved or not, but is a question of spiritual quality in what has been built.

There is coming a day of God's judgment when He will arise to shake everything that can be shaken (Hebrews 12: 25-29; Haggai 2:6-7). Nations, businesses, the heavens, religious institutions, armies, great men and the works of man will be shaken. Only what has been built on God's cornerstone will stand. For this reason, we are responsible to not build our lives on sand, but on the stone that God has made available to us. Let

us consider how the Person and work of Christ is revealed in the cornerstone that God has laid.

Why a Cornerstone?

Scriptures use a number of symbolic terms when referring to the Lord Jesus. For example, He is spoken of as a lamb, a lion, a door and a shepherd. The Holy Spirit used these words to point out specific redemptive qualities of His Person or ministry. This is also why Jesus is described as God's cornerstone.

What specific parameters of a cornerstone identify those qualities of His Son that our Father in heaven wants us to build our lives upon?

The answer is substance and shape! The size of a cornerstone will vary depending on weight and dimensions of the two walls it is to support. However, shape is not arbitrary. For example, a thin stone could only support a limited weight. A large stone of non-uniform thickness having irregular surfaces would be unacceptable since high places would bear all the weight. This would lead to surface fractures and instability. A cornerstone will support maximum weight when it is rectangular in shape with smooth parallel surfaces. The key factor in shape are the three pairs of parallel surfaces: top and bottom, the two sides and the two ends. All points on the upper surface of such a stone will support an equal amount of weight with stability.

The six surfaces represent six truths concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as the foundation for our salvation. The parallel surfaces mean that these six truths are related in pairs; that is, there are three pairs of related truths that reveal the redemptive provisions of Christ for believers. To establish lives on these six truths is to build with gold, silver and precious stones. The

provision is from God; the responsibility to believe and obey is ours. For this reason, we must be careful how we build.

Let us examine the truths that are associated with each pair of surfaces.

The Bottom and Top Surfaces

The Bottom Surface:

This surface supports all the load that rests upon the cornerstone. It points to what is the first and most important relationship that a new believer has with God, which is their surrender to the lordship of Christ. His lordship should never be separated from His role as Savior. He has bought us with His blood and we belong to Him. He is our Lord and Savior.

*That if you confess with your mouth **Jesus as Lord**, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. (Romans 10:9)*

The saving grace of God calls for faith to believe, repent and obey. An overemphasis on obedience can lead to legalism, while an over emphasis on grace can lead to licentiousness. Biblical teaching on the lordship of Christ is a divine balance of God's love and grace with a personal commitment to obey. The only protection that we have from going our own way lies in our submission to the Lord Jesus. His lordship should become the most important truth in our Christian life.

The Top Surface:

The significance of the top and bottom surfaces being parallel is that they have a dependent relationship with each other. The bottom surface concerns the personal relationship of each believer to Christ as Lord. The top surface refers to the

headship of Christ, a relationship to the church, to all believers collectively. However, headship is only possible when lordship is present. Jesus is head over all things to the church, but this only becomes a reality when His people obey Him.

The significance of headship is that all life flow in His body begins in Jesus, the head. All life functions, all direction, all revelation and all anointing to minister begin in Him, who is the head, and flows out to appropriate members of His body to accomplish His will. Something that will only take place if members respond (the corresponding surface) in obedience to their Lord.

While lordship speaks of obedience to authority, headship speaks of relationship where the life of Christ flows out from Him in dynamics of ministry and fellowship to members of His body (Ephesians 4:16; Colossians 2:19).

One observation of spiritual headship is that the power to initiate life functions in the church cannot be delegated. *Jesus is eternally the one and only Head of His body.*

Overseers in a church are to submit to His headship, not to replace it. All believers know how difficult it is to experience the headship of Christ in the content and timing of body ministry. Nevertheless one mark of God's sons is that they are led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14). Elders require faith to lay down programmed control of meetings and seek to flow with the Holy Spirit. Programs and agendas are poor substitutes for being led by the Spirit. The following are five simple guidelines for developing godly oversight of body ministry:

- There must be freedom for Christ to make His will known.
- Members must be willing to defer to the anointing of peers so that the flow of ministry reflects the mind and direction of the Holy Spirit.

- The primary motivation for ministry is love out of a pure heart.
- Body ministry should be characterized by spontaneity and simplicity.
- These, and related principles, are best practiced in small groups.

In summary, the lordship and headship of Christ are two absolutely vital truths upon which Jesus is building His church. Lordship applies to each believer *personally*, while headship addresses all believers *collectively*.

We are to be subject to one another, and to those who oversee our lives in the church; however, this submission must never violate *His* authority over us. Jesus is lord of each believer, and He is head over all things to the church.

The Two Side Surfaces

The First Side Surface:

Jesus referred to Himself by the phrase, “the Son of Man,” more than by any other name. His humanity was not only important, it was necessary in the purpose of God. He could not have been the cornerstone apart from being a man. For that reason, I have chosen the first of the two sides of the cornerstone to refer to the humanity of Jesus.

Satan tempted Adam to sin. For that reason, God ordained that Satan would be defeated by a man, who as Savior, would restore mankind to righteousness and eternal life. Death came through the first Adam, but life was restored through the last Adam.

For that to take place, this man would have to keep all the Law perfectly having committed no sin! He could then give His life as the complete atonement for all sin, being the offering for every sin ever committed, past, present and future. His shed blood cleanses away every sin of all who accept Him as their Lord and Savior. Believers are justified by their faith. Thus the Law is totally satisfied and fulfilled in the lives of believers through the atoning death of Jesus.

When Jesus was nailed to the cross, our human, Adamic nature was nailed to the cross with Him (Galatians 2:20). By faith we died with Him. Salvation is more than the forgiveness of sin; it also deals with deliverance from our fallen Adamic nature.

Salvation is made up of three truths: the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The first two truths concern the human body of Jesus. After His death, His body was buried in a grave, from which He was resurrected three days later with an eternal, glorified body, the likeness of which is promised to all believers at the resurrection (1Corinthians 15:42-54). In essence, salvation is the transformation of mortal earthly bodies of believers into imperishable spiritual bodies with which they will inherit the kingdom of God.

We are to appropriate all that Jesus has purchased for us in His death and burial. The first step for those who have repented and believed on Him for the forgiveness of sins, is to personally identify with the burial of Jesus by being baptized in water. We do not have to continue in sin. By faith, we bury our old Adamic nature in a grave of water, and we come up out of the water to begin a walk in newness of life.

We exchange our old Adamic life for His life by allowing Him to begin living in us—all by faith.

*Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **so we too might walk in newness of life . . . knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him**, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, **so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.** (Romans 6: 4, 6)*

By faith, we are to *daily* reckon ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ (Romans 6:8-11). The act of being identified with Jesus in His burial is also described in scripture as “circumcision of the heart” (Romans 2:28-29).

Thus you were circumcised when you were buried with Him in your baptism, in which you were also raised with Him to a new life through your faith in the working of God . . . (Colossians 2:12, AMPLIFIED BIBLE)

In His humanity, Jesus *totally broke the power of Satan* over the sins and fallen nature of mankind. This is the truth represented by one side of the cornerstone.

The Second Side Surface:

This side of the cornerstone represents a truth that is intrinsically related to the humanity of Jesus. It is the mediatory role of Jesus as high priest (Hebrews 4:14-16).

*For there is one God and **one mediator** also between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus.** (1Timothy 2:5)*

Jesus could not have been our high priest apart from first being a man. He had to be tempted, just as we are, and to overcome all temptation as a man.

Because of these temptations He knows our needs and intercedes for us accordingly. This testing involved more than His years of adult ministry; it also included His life as a child

being subject to His parents, and as a young man helping Joseph in the carpenter shop, and finally working to support His family after Joseph died. He was tested in all those phases of human life, so that we can confidently bring our needs, problems and concerns to the throne of grace (Philippians 4:6-7; Hebrews 2:17-18).

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

Prayer is an essential practice in building one's life on God's cornerstone. The victory of prayer is the truth that Jesus is continually interceding for us, and that He provides grace and mercy as we make our needs known to Him.

The Two End Surfaces

The First End Surface:

The first end surface of the cornerstone represents the divinity of Christ. He could not be the cornerstone apart from being divine. He came to earth as Immanuel, God with us. Begotten by the Holy Spirit, the blood in His veins was the blood of God which is efficacious as the perfect and only sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins.

There was another reason why Jesus had to be divine; He came to reveal the character, power and purpose of the Father to mankind. This could only take place by the Father living within the Son. Jesus plainly taught His disciples that He and the Father were one; that the Father in Him was the One who spoke and performed miracles. To see and hear Jesus was to see and hear the Father. He only did the Father's will. He taught that His Father's purpose was to establish His kingdom on earth, and to bring forth a family of sons patterned after the

image of Jesus, who could one day rule with Him in His kingdom (Hebrews 2:10). The challenge that Jesus gave His disciples was that they would yield to Him, to His living in them, just as He had yielded to His Father living in Him.

As we embrace the will of Christ, for Him to be our Lord and live within us, we fulfill God's call and purpose for the church (Ephesians 1:3-11). This calls for a deepening incarnation where Christ will be more fully formed within us (Ephesians 3:16-19). It is more than knowledge; it is a personal, intimate relationship through the glory of His presence in a Spirit-filled life. Christ in us is our hope of glory!

The reality of what God has purposed to build was first demonstrated by revelation of the Father in the Son. The principle of divine incarnation, where Christ lives within us, is a fundamental truth of what God is building on the cornerstone. This truth points to the spiritually organic nature of the church in contrast to religious institutions that man, in his humanity, builds for God.

An important quality of the divinity of Jesus is that He is eternal. He created time as a continuum of existence in which events occur in an order of past, present and future. All of the created world is constrained by the flow of linear time. However, God is not so constrained since He is eternal.²

He is not the God of yesterday or of tomorrow; He is I AM, God of the present without beginning or end (Revelation 22:13). I am sure that there are no calendars or clocks in heaven; everything there is "present tense."

God is able to declare the end from the beginning, not simply because He has prophetic insight, but because He has already been there. He is able to move forward in time and view all that takes place ages before men of that generation are born. He is the Lamb that was foreknown before the founda-

tion of the world (1 Peter 1:20). The names of all who will of their own volition choose to serve Him were also recorded before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4; Revelation 13:8). The point is that He has already seen the decisions that men will make in their generation, ages before they will ever be born. He will never coerce men to do His will, but He will seek through acts of love, mercy and ordered circumstances to encourage men to seek Him and His will for their decisions. And He knows the decisions that they will make.

This divine insight is the basis for the call that God places on His disciples. Those whom He foreknows will choose to serve Him; they are the ones whom He will call—not by coercion, but by foreknowledge.

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the first-born among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)

Two examples from scripture of God's divine insight are David and the prophet Jeremiah.

*For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mothers womb . . . My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; **and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.** (Psalm 139:13, 15-16)*

***Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.** (Jeremiah 1:5)*

What was true for David and Jeremiah, is also true for each child of God.

*. . . who saved us **and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.** (2Timothy 1:9)*

We do not know the future, but the Lord is anticipating what He has already foreseen to take place in our life. We must be confident of this truth as we respond to His call. God's perspective is as follows:

*That which is has been already, and that which will be has already been, **for God seeks what has passed by.** (Ecclesiastes 3:15)*

In making disciples it is important to establish this truth of God's foresight into their hearts, so that they will better understand how to respond to His call on their lives. It requires revelation to distinguish between our natural world of linear time, and the world of eternity to which we are being prepared and called.

*. . . also **He has set eternity in their heart, without which man cannot find out the work that God makes from the beginning and to the end.** (Ecclesiastes 3:11; THE INTERLINEAR BIBLE)*

It may be future for us, but the Lord has already been there and is ready to guide, pray for, encourage and comfort us as our future unfolds. He is present to shepherd me through all the future events of my life which He already knows about. Thus I am predestined according to His foreknowledge of how I will respond on my own volition. Even though some of my decisions will be wrong, He will never leave or forsake me for He knows the end from the beginning.

Being at rest in God, with confidence in His purpose and call on my life, is an essential foundation truth for building a stable victorious life on God's cornerstone, and finding my place in the body of Christ.

The Second End Surface:

The second end surface of the cornerstone represents a ministry of Jesus that flows out of His divinity. The Lord is our Shepherd! Only God can guide His people into all that He has prepared for them. This is an essential truth of the cornerstone laid by God.³ The life and teaching of Jesus brought the reality of Psalm 23 into the New Testament (John 10).

It is one thing to know the call and purpose of God in our life; it is another thing to be molded by hearing His voice and being responsive to His rod and staff. It is primarily through the shepherding ministry of Jesus that the other five truths of the cornerstone are established in the lives of His sheep. He knows each of us by name, and gently leads us into all truth.

I am the good Shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. (John 10:14-15)

This last surface, representing the ministry of Jesus as the Shepherd of His sheep, introduces the role of ministries in the church. The Lord appoints responsible men after His own heart to be undershepherds of His people in local churches. These overseers, or elders, are responsible to shepherd the flock of God among them. In caring for the sheep, these men do not replace Jesus as shepherd for they will always point the sheep to Him, and reinforce His place as chief Shepherd. They will seek to be an example of Jesus in their conduct and service, and they will be careful to not come between Jesus and His

sheep. These men will not be hierarchical in their relationship with one another, but as servants who lead by example, they will defer to one another (Matthew 20:25-28; 1 Peter 5:1-3). An important requirement of shepherding is to mentor and equip each sheep for their place of service in the body of Christ. The ministry graces listed in Ephesians 4:11 enable the equipping process to take place. The ultimate goal of shepherding is to see living stones shaped and built together on the cornerstone into a spiritual house in Christ (1 Peter 2:4-5).

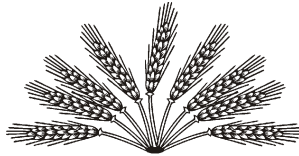
From among the overseers and other believers in local churches, the Lord raises up translocal ministries to strengthen and build His church. These ministries will travel between assemblies to equip the saints, to impart vision, to teach and to establish relationships between churches. Apostles and prophets have special grace to unveil the cornerstone and reveal the purpose of God. He is not interested only in the salvation of souls and performing miracles. Out of Jew and Gentile, He is building His house, the place of His eternal habitation.

... you (Jews and Gentiles) ... are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

God's purpose is centered in His house (Revelation 21). The essential truth in His house is ensuring that the foundation is correct. Everything must be built on Christ, the cornerstone!

Conclusion

The cornerstone that God has laid in Zion for the salvation of each believer, and upon which He is building His church, provides a foundation that cannot be shaken. How well one appropriates the truths represented by the three pairs of cornerstone surfaces will determine the quality of what is built. The garments that we are weaving today are the ones we will wear in eternity. Therefore, let each man be careful how he builds.



—End Notes—

1. Dale Rumble, GIVE THE LORD BACK HIS CHURCH (Fountain of Life Publications, 1999).
2. Dale Rumble, OUR ETERNAL CREATOR, LORD OF THE AGES, a Fountain of Life tract.
3. Dale Rumble, SHEPHERD MY SHEEP, a Fountain of Life tract.

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