

611 The Head of the Corner

Last week's Reflection, 610 "Cut out without hands", (from Daniel 2.34), refers to the stone revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in his perplexing dream about that "great image". This stone duly "smote the image on his feet ... and brake them to pieces", causing their shattered bits to be carried away like chaff on the wind, while the stone, which we now can clearly identify as the Christ-Stone Himself, "became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (from vv.34-35).

We often come across references to "stone", "rock" and "foundation" within God's Word, which always embody precious spiritual truths. Thus - "And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them" (Exodus 24.12, KJV), Then, later on, the LORD "gave unto Moses, when he had finished communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31.18). Why were they written on stone we might ask? – rather than on papyrus for instance, which would be much easier for Moses to carry! The answer is clear when we think about it: stone is solid, permanent, weighty in all senses, and hence those written words were equally so – and still are. How different would our nation be if the Ten Commandments were still taught, accepted and obeyed as being key parts of God's authoritative truth!

These two tables of stone were kept in the ark of the covenant – as a strong, silent, constant statement of God's covenant and of God's commandments (Exodus 25.21; 40.20 / I Kings 8.9). The Old Testament history of Israel and Judah is then filled with God's covenant people repeatedly "erring and straying from His ways like lost sheep", as the old Prayer Book 'General Confession' puts it: again and again, they swapped those "tables of stone" for their own fancy ideas, and always and quickly paid the price for their folly.

That wonderful scene in Jeremiah 36 comes to mind: as God's words were being read to him by Jehudi from a scroll, King Jehoiakim, in his "winter house, with a fire burning in the hearth before him", cut up the scroll a few leaves at a time "and cast it into the fire, until all the roll was consumed ..." (from Jeremiah 36.21-26). The words on that scroll could be burned up before his eyes because they were NOT on this occasion

written on stone, but their truthfulness remained as if they were so written. Sure enough, the king's end was not long in coming (Jeremiah 36.27-31 / II Chronicles 36.5-8).

In Isaiah 28.16 we read, "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner [stone], a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (KJV), that is, "need never get flustered", because belief in that Stone is utterly well-founded.

Next we can mention that great verse in Psalm 118.22, "The stone [which] the builders refused is become the head [stone] of the corner", which the Lord Jesus quotes to "the chief priests and Pharisees", clearly implying that He Himself is that Headstone. They were not too pleased to be reminded that whoever that Stone may fall upon will be "ground to powder" – and made their plans accordingly (from Matthew 21.42-46 / Isaiah 8.13-15 / (Romans 9.33)).

Those priestly plans soon succeeded dreadfully at Calvary and then failed miserably at the empty tomb. The Lord's ascension and promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit were soon followed by the healing of the lame man "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 3.2-16). In Acts Chapter 4 Peter, having been summoned before the "big-wigs", gives them, in boxing parlance, a sharp upper-cut followed by a wonderful knock-out! – Jesus Christ of Nazareth, "whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead ... is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (from vv. 10-12). Praise God, Peter's accusers ended up "sprawled on the canvas and out for the count"! (vv.13-22 // see also I Peter 2.4,6 / Ephesians 2.20). We are well aware that this same message, of Jesus' Person, Name, power and truth, is now entrusted to people like us. By God's grace may we use our own God-given "boxing gloves" courteously and effectively in proclaiming Christ as "the Head of the Corner" in these needy days.

We can close this time with Jesus' well-known words - "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock"; the rain, the floods, the winds came – "and it fell not: for it was founded upon - a Rock" (Matthew 7.24-25).

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