

## **Coming to the Lord as to a Living Stone and Being Built as Living Stones into a Spiritual House to Offer up Spiritual Sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ**

The theme of Christ our life that runs throughout scripture is often next to another theme, the building of God's dwelling place where the high priest offered sacrifices to God as his chosen people gathered to feast unto God, first in the tabernacle then later in his holy city, Jerusalem, on the mountains of Zion.

Jesus made the apostle Peter an example of this after he as Simon, son of Jonah, received the revelation from the Father that the Son of Man is Jesus, the Christ, the son of the living God. (Matthew 16:13-16), Jesus told him "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been bound in heaven."

This new name, Peter, means rock or stone, and Peter never forgot this lesson, extending it to the believers dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Immediately after he exhorted them as newborn babes to grow by the milk of the word (1 Peter 2:1-3) he said "And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is chosen and precious in the sight of God are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:4-5), reciting Isaiah 28:16 and 8:14-15 to show Jesus as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies that the stone the builders rejected would become the chief cornerstone of God's temple and a stumbling stone and a rock of offense to unbelievers.

We see the themes of Christ our life and the need to grow in Him next to being built up in Him in Colossians 2:6-7 and in other letters written by the apostle Paul (see 1 Corinthians 3:1-23, 6:19 and Ephesians 2:20-22). Paul told the church of God in Corinth that they are God's cultivated field (or farm), God's building in Chapter 3 and later (in Chapter 6) he asked "do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?"

The earthly temple of God (aka house of God) was built with stones, but "God does not live in houses made by human hands. Heaven is His throne and the earth a footstool for His feet. This is the one I will esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at My word." (Isaiah 66:1-2).

We see in Revelation that indeed Christ will fulfill His promise to build his church, which also can be translated as assembly. In Revelation 21, as the New Jerusalem descends out of heaven to earth as a bride adorned for her husband, where God and his chosen redeemed people dwell together forever. The New Covenant ministry of The Spirit brings forth this transformation "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all (that turn our heart to the Lord) having been unveiled in face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the

Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

“Therefore I exhort you, brothers, through the compassions of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy to God, well-pleasing, which is your reasonable worship service. And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, for you to prove what is the good and well-pleasing and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)

These themes of God’s building up the church as the body of Christ and Christ’s bride are part of God’s great mystery in Ephesians 3-5 and complete the remainder of the gospel of God in Romans 9-16.

The apostle John tells us that John the baptist told his disciples and a Jew who were arguing about purification and had noticed that Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John the baptist was: “I am not the Christ, but, I have been sent ahead of Him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. He must increase, but I must decrease.

“He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:28-36)

John concludes his book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ with this open invitation:

“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morning Star. The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” Let the one who hears say, “Come!” And let the one who is thirsty come, and the one who desires the water of life drink freely.

I close this book concerning Christ who is our life, celebrating together with you that we have heard and by His mercy respond to Jesus’s invitation and say, “Amen, I am thirsty, come Lord Jesus. You are The Living Stone who was despised and rejected of men, but are chosen and precious to God. Be our bridegroom and build us up as living stones together on the foundation of the apostles and prophets into a dwelling place of God in Spirit forever, to your praise and glory!”

