

LIVING STONES OF THE TEMPLE

Peter Hay, prepared for the Presbytery fellowship word, 26 September 2021

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Introduction

In our last session we considered the recovery of Adam to his predestination as a son of God, in fellowship with Yahweh. Fundamental to his personal recovery was the mercy and grace of God which was extended to him from the offering of the Lamb on the cross, who was slain from the foundation of the world.

Atonement, redemption and clothing for offering

This prevenient mercy and grace of God to recover Adam and Eve to Himself was the *blood* that was shed for their atonement and redemption by the sacrifice that the Lord made.

The next feature of Adam's recovery involved his offering at the gate. Adam was also 'clothed' for his participation in *offering* at the gate of Eden.

Presenting ourselves on the ground of the *aggelos*

He was drawn to the Lord for forgiveness and redemption, and then he *presented himself* in the way in which the Lord has established him. This involved his offering at the gate of Eden, on the ground of the *aggelos*. That was the ground where the two cherubim were, and those cherubim were angels, or *aggelos*.

In our setting, that is *the ground of the presbytery*, which John tells us is also 'the fellowship of the Father and the Son'.

Adam had to *present himself* on the ground of the *aggelos*.

Adam's reception of the word of the cross, which was a flaming sword in their hand, connected him to the *agape* fellowship of Yahweh. He 'presented himself' by offering on that ground.

The sword of the word of the cross

He received the word, which came to him through the sword which was in the hand of the angels. That sword limits a person's participation or efforts to come into that fellowship according to the principles of the flesh, which caused mankind to be put out of the garden.

However, it also 'cut him in' to relationship with the Lord. This is the word of the cross.

By receiving this word, Adam was *restored to the headship of Christ*, so that the thorns and thistles that he experienced in the context of his obedience, which is the ground where he had to labour and toil, were now 'for his sake'.

He understood and accepted that they were necessary for his obtaining the inheritance of sonship that was predestined for him by the Father, in the Son. That was very individual. It was very specific to Adam and, of course, to every individual from that 'one blood'.

Our expression as sons - being fitted together as living stones in the temple of Christ's body

In our session today, we will consider the *relational* implications of this principle. Our expression as sons, in relation to this restorative process of Yahweh toward us, has expression only as we are being fitted together as living stones in the temple of Christ's body, which is the 'house' that belongs to the Father.

The process through which we are obtaining our sonship, being born of the Spirit by embracing this process, has reality only because we are being fitted together as living stones being *built on Christ*.

The crown of thorns and the cross were reproaches that Christ carried outside the camp

I will demonstrate how that process happens as we are 'going out to Him, bearing His reproach'.

We know that Jesus was crucified on Mount Calvary, and that that site was outside the gates of Jerusalem. We read, 'Therefore, Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us *go forth to Him outside the camp bearing His reproach*, for here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one that is to come.' Heb13:12-14.

Christ 'bearing' reproaches meant that He 'carried' something. The reproaches that Christ bore, or carried, as He suffered outside the camp, more than 'represented' something; they were actually something that He literally carried, and it caused Him pain. They were also indicative of reproach being laid on Him.

They were the crown of thorns, which was placed on His head; and the cross, which was laid on His shoulder and which He carried to Golgotha. He literally carried these reproaches outside the camp.

These were the only two things that He took with Him!

The crown of thorns

We will first consider the crown of thorns. We know that, in the Praetorium, the soldiers mocked Christ by placing a crown of thorns on His head; and a mock sceptre, which was a reed, in His hand.

These thorns were a painful reproach against the headship of Christ, who is the King of kings. He was the King of the Jews. He was mocked and maligned, and they placed a crown of thorns on His head to mock His headship.

Jesus wore this crown as He carried His cross to Golgotha. 'Golgotha' is another term for Calvary. It means 'hill of the skull'.

When Jesus was lifted up on the cross His garments were taken from Him, and the crown of thorns was placed on His head.

Rejected by men

Pilate made a sign that was placed on the cross, above His head. The sign said, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews'.

When that happened, the leaders of the Jewish community complained to Pilate, particularly about that sign.

In response to their complaint, Pilate said to them, 'What I have written I have written.' Joh 19:22. He wasn't able to explain why he wrote that or whether it was reasonable or unreasonable. He simply said, 'What I have written I have written.' Pilate's statement indicated that there was no valid reason for Christ's crucifixion. He gave no explanation, no valid reason, indicating that Jesus had simply been 'rejected by men'.

Christ's rejection marked the end of the Jewish, Mosaic covenant with its temple and sacrifices

When He was lifted up on the cross, and this sign was being communicated to everyone, it indicated that Jesus had been rejected by men. The point to

note is that Christ's rejection, which was manifest when He was lifted up, marked the end of the Jewish, Mosaic covenant with its temple and sacrifices. He was lifted up - the Word of God, the King of kings. There was no reason for it. He was simply rejected by men.

When that happened, it marked the end of the Mosaic Law. Moses had received the Law before He received the instructions regarding the tabernacle, and all of the activities and culture of the tabernacle. This meant that when the Law was taken away, there was no longer a tabernacle or context for the practice or culture associated with that Law.

The Cornerstone of the true temple

At the same time as it was being finished, and Christ had been rejected, He was established as the Chief Cornerstone, or Foundation Stone, of the true temple, which is the Father's house.

He was now building this new temple, while on the cross.

This is the most amazing thing that ever happened in the history of humanity! He was lifted up. A whole covenant and temple were destroyed in that moment. At the same time, He who had simply been rejected by men was set as the Foundation Stone of the true tabernacle.

As the Word of God, Christ nailed the Law to the cross

We will look at some Scriptures that demonstrate this point. We will begin with the point of the destruction of the temple because of the doing away of the Mosaic covenant.

'And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven all your trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.' Col2:13-15.

The point that I want to lean on here is that He has taken it out of the way, *having nailed it to His cross*.

You see that Jesus was that Word! It was not that He was on the cross, and someone went and got a

copy of the ten commandments and nailed it to Him as well. He was the Word of God, the Royal Law, the Royal Word - and He was that *among them*.

Christ built the temple of His body, on the cross

That temple only had relevance because He was there. As soon as He was nailed on the cross, He took that Law out of their hands, and He destroyed their temple.

He said to them, 'Destroy this temple and in three days He would raise it up again.' Joh 2:19. Christ was talking about His own body.

He was making the point that the bricks and mortar of the temple in Jerusalem only had legitimacy because He was the Word of God and He was there.

When He was nailed on the cross, He took it out of their hands as a covenant with the flesh.

This is an amazing principle. This is the tabernacle of Moses, the tabernacle that belonged to the flesh, being destroyed, *in His body*.

That was the end of that covenant and the destruction of that temple - the temple of His body.

We read, 'The stone which the builders have rejected has become the Chief Cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.' Psa 118:22-24.

We recall that Pilate had said, 'What I have written I have written.' There was no reason for His crucifixion, except that He had been rejected by men.

Those who will rejoice and be glad 'in that day' are those who are 'going out to Him, bearing His reproach'.

You can rejoice in the day of your reproach, knowing that you are being *built* on that very Stone which was rejected by men.

He was lifted up and ended the Old Covenant and its temple. And now the One who was rejected has become the Foundation Stone of the new tabernacle. He was building that tabernacle, or temple, of His body, on the cross.

No building of His temple was happening other than while He was on the cross. It is amazing and notable that, at the foot of the cross, the Jewish leaders reproached and mocked Christ. This was the reproach regarding this very destruction of the temple, and the rebuilding of the new one. They actually specifically drew on His own words to mock Him.

Early in His ministry, Jesus said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Joh 2:19. He was speaking about the bricks and mortar temple, and saying that He would raise it up.

The point that He was making, as I said before, was that that temple's legitimacy was only because of the word of God, which was the Law; and He was the embodiment of it.

When He died, or was destroyed, that temple was destroyed. It had no currency or legitimacy. He was saying, in effect, 'If you kill Me, that's killed; it's dead; it's destroyed.'

'Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken us forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days"? He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scriptures and the word which Jesus had said.' Joh 2:19-22.

On the basis of that teaching, the Jews were at the foot of the cross as He was actually doing this. They were at the foot of the cross, mocking Him on this very point.

'Those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from this cross".' Mat 27:39-40.

They shook their heads, saying, 'This guy is an absolute loser. This is absolutely pathetic.' They just shook their heads, saying, 'What nonsense!'

Living stones built upon Christ; bearing His reproach

Christ was lifted up, and crucified, as the Foundation Stone of the true temple. The Jews destroyed Christ's body as the physical temple of God on the cross; but Christ raised it up by

building us as living stones *upon Himself*, who was the Foundation of the true temple.

This is an amazing principle! There was destruction, on one hand, and a new building on the other, happening right on the cross.

We have to bear that reproach if we are to be the living stones built on that Rock.

There is no other place to be built into the temple, which is His body, other than 'coming out to Him'.

We have been exhorted by Paul, 'Therefore let us go forth to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.'

Further, we have received instruction from the apostle Peter, who said, 'Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' 1Pe 2:4-8.

'Going forth to Him outside the cross, bearing His reproach, is the way that we come to Him to be built as living stones on that Foundation.

This is the first key implication of what I want to share today.

We come to Jesus Christ to be built on this foundation, by going out to Him, bearing His reproach.

It is an amazing point that Calvary is *the building site of the true temple!*

That is the only living stone.

Christ, the Foundation Stone, which was rejected by men must be precious to us

We are not being built as living stones - born again, or 'made-alive' sons of God - into the temple of His body *unless* we consider that Foundation Stone which was rejected by all men to be 'precious'.

That is the first thing that we need to do. That requires us to *turn*. It is not just a cognitive activity. This means turning from a way of living because, remember, He was *rejected by all men*. We need to turn from having the 'sight' that is basic to all men, to receiving *illumination* to see Him as being precious.

The first thing we need to do is to consider the Foundation that is rejected by all men to be precious - and then we gladly bear His reproach.

That means going out to Him, bearing His reproach, which is the same as coming to Him as the Foundation Stone, rejected by men, but precious to us.

So, we are not being built as living stones unless we consider the foundation stone that is rejected by all men to be precious, and we gladly bear His reproach with Him.

This is the confession of Paul: 'I have been crucified with Christ.'

He was revealed as 'the stone that the builders rejected' when he was crucified with Christ; and *that's* where he was reproached. He 'wore the crown', which was the reproach of His headship. And he was 'cursed on the cross', with Christ.

If you want to go out and bear the reproach with Christ, you have to confess, 'I have been crucified with [Him]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law' [which He has now nailed to the cross], then Christ died in vain.' Gal 2:20-21.

Reproach is the denial of the need to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings

If righteousness doesn't come through fellowship in His offering and sufferings, then Christ wasted His time.

'Reproach' is the denial of the need to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

That denial is how we 'set aside the grace of God.'

These words in the book of Galatians were the very words of the apostle Paul when he admonished the apostle Peter, who was not willing to bear the reproach of eating with the Gentiles in the presence of the Judaisers. We remember that he came down and would eat with the Gentiles when the Jews weren't there. When the Jews - the ones who maintained the need to keep the Jewish customs - came, Peter would withdraw himself from the Gentiles and eat only with them. He was not willing to bear the reproach of those Jews against him by accepting 'Jew and Gentile in one body'.

Building again on the things of the flesh

Jesus said to Peter that he, Peter, was the foundation: 'On this rock I will build My church.'

Paul said to Peter, 'You are in danger of shipwreck.' That means dying, falling asleep and failing to enter.

He said that Peter was at risk of shipwreck 'as a transgressor', because he was building again the things which were destroyed by Christ on the cross.

Peter was endeavouring to keep the Law and the ordinances which Jesus had destroyed in His body, on the cross.

By failing to bear the reproach associated with that when the Jews came, Peter was building again the very things that Jesus had destroyed.

Paul said, 'If you build those things again because you are rejecting the need for fellowship in the reproach of Christ, you become a transgressor.'

Paul said that the answer to it was to confess, 'I am actually crucified with Him. The very things that He destroyed in His flesh are being destroyed in my flesh, and I am not ashamed of the gospel. I am not ashamed to walk in the way of the word as it's being revealed to me, even though it draws the mocking and the reproach of those who only see by the sight of their own eyes.'

We see this most acutely in religious Christendom. That's what Peter was conforming himself to.

And he did hear his friend, Paul. He found recovery, because he was the one who said, 'Come into Him as a living stone rejected by men.' Peter had an illumination that he was now bearing witness to.

Paul said that Peter was at risk of shipwreck as a transgressor, by building again those things which were destroyed by Christ through His offering and sufferings; that is, by returning to the religious customs of the Law.

When we do not receive the reproaches of Christ, we are disconnected from His body

The same is true for us. We may also shun the reproaches of Christ and, in so doing, hamper our fruitfulness, or impede our fruitfulness, because of our resultant *disconnection from the body of Christ*.

The point is that the body is the temple. You are not being built into the temple if you won't receive the reproaches of Christ.

We also shun the reproaches of Christ, which hampers our fruitfulness, which is only possible through connection to the body, when we entertain and embrace, as normal, those who, through their speech and conduct, are enemies of Christ.

If you embrace that and normalise that as some form of 'Christian charity', you are failing to bear the very reproaches that were laid on Jesus.

Everyone has the freedom to choose that. That is an amazing dignity of the gospel. We all have the choice to choose that.

If you choose to deny the cross of Christ as being the place - the *only* place - of *fellowship*, by avoiding the reproaches against Christ, then you are not being built as a living stone on that Foundation.

You may even have been born again, but you will die away, because the only place of fruitfulness is to be built on that. Do not deny Christ at that point.

Believing that His life is found in an expression that is not 'coming to Him, bearing His reproach'

We shun the reproaches of Christ, hampering our fruitfulness, because of disconnection to His body when we entertain and embrace those who, through their speech and conduct, are enemies of Christ. People do this under the guise of Christian love. Remember, these were the Jewish religious 'elite' who mocked Him.

This approach is 'a form of godliness', a form of Christian expression, which denies that resurrection life is in the death of Christ.

Such a person believes that His life is found in some other form of *religious expression*. People do this under the guise of Christian love, but it is really *the rejection of the word of the cross*, and unwillingness to suffer the scorn and reproach that Jesus suffered.

We align ourselves with those who 'wagged their heads' and mocked Christ, who was the Word.

Coming to Him, the precious Foundation Stone; the Word

That's the opposite of 'coming to Him, the Foundation Stone, rejected by men, who is *precious in our sight*.

Remember, Jesus the foundation stone is the Word of God. The evidence that you view that foundation stone as precious is that you view *the word of God* which is being proclaimed by His messengers, as being precious.

It is not just saying, 'I think Jesus is precious.' We all think that.

Believing that Jesus is precious is recognising that *He is the Word*, and it is recognising the treasure of that; that's the Foundation Stone.

The grace of God is ministered through the word from the headship of Christ

We have been talking over these last couple of weeks about *the headship of Christ*. The Scriptures teach us that Jesus is both the Foundation Stone and the *Headstone*, the Capstone.

What is on the Headstone? There is a crown of thorns.

We will now consider this element of the Capstone, or Headstone.

In order to confess that we have been crucified with Christ as one who is building on the Stone that was rejected by men, Paul said that we must not 'set aside the grace of God'.

'I have been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live. Christ lives in me, and the life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God. I do not set aside the grace of God.' Gal 2:20.

The point is that, if we set aside the grace of God, we cannot confess, 'I have been crucified with Christ.'

The grace of God is ministered through 'His word of grace'.

The grace of God is *ministered through the word that proceeds from the headship of Christ*.

Christ, the Headstone of the new temple

In this regard, we note that Christ, on the cross, wearing the crown of thorns, was also designated by the prophet Zechariah as the Headstone, or Capstone, of the true temple.

I love this point. He was on the cross. He had destroyed the old temple. He was building a new temple on the foundation, which is Him. And He is the Capstone of that body, of that temple. He is the Head of it.

'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord of Hosts.' He's talking about the building of the temple.

Grace, grace to it

'Who are you, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And He shall bring forth the Capstone [the Headstone] with shouts of "*Grace, grace to it!*"' Zec 4:6-7.

How beautiful is that? The grace of life is resurrection life, coming from His headship.

And it is being shouted as the word of God to you and to me. If you want to be built on the foundation, you need to receive the word of grace which is being shouted: 'Grace, grace to it.'

'Grace, grace' is proclaimed to the Head; and you are a recipient of that grace of life as you are *connected* to the Head.

The grace of life received from Christ through obedience to His word

Grace is the resurrection power of God.

There is *no access to grace* if we are not joined to the headship of Christ by receiving His word as it is ministered by those whom He has set as stewards over His house.

We are not under the protection of His 'house' unless we receive the grace of life that proceeds from the Capstone. That's on the negative side.

On the positive side, if the word is precious in your sight, and you are receiving the grace of life from the headship of Christ through obedience to that word, you will delight in this.

You are protected. You are safe from the God's judgement on this world, because you are being delivered in the body, through it, into an inheritance.

Not only that but, also, you are protected under the headship of Christ, from the roaring lion, Satan, who is 'seeking whom he may devour'.

If you are built on that Stone, and are receiving that word of life from His headship, you are completely *secure*.

You are actually being *built into that body* so that you can *offer up sacrifices* to God as a member of His body.

If we reject His word, we call darkness, 'light'

We will be completely *vulnerable* to the influence of 'the evil one', and it will become our familiar way of living, if we reject the word of Christ's headship.

We will call the darkness of our own perspective 'the light' and, in that case, the darkness has *overtaken* us. We will swear by this darkness, and we will fight for it, determining that our own sight is true, and that is what we will do. We will end up declaring that the true light, which has come, which was revealed from Christ's face on the cross, is not light at all.

The word of God defines 'the ground of truth', where we present ourselves in offering

The word of God, by the Spirit, defines 'the ground of truth'. The word is coming from His Head, which is the Capstone.

It defines for us the ground of truth on which we are being built, and upon which we present ourselves as living sacrifices who are holy and acceptable to God.

Remember, we cannot confess, 'I have been crucified with Christ as one who has come to the Stone rejected by men, and being built on it', *unless* you are not setting aside the grace of God.

We do not set aside the grace of God when we *receive this word* which defines the ground of truth for us.

We are not the 'determiners' of the truth. We accept that that truth is coming from Jesus, who said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.'

The word of God, by the Spirit, defines the ground of truth on which we are being built, and upon which we *present ourselves as living sacrifices* who are holy and acceptable to God.

This is what Paul said to Timothy. 'Your work as a presbyter, Timothy, is to teach this principle to

the church.' This is the work, if you like, of an *aggelos*.

He said, 'These things I write to you [Timothy], though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in *the house of God*, which is *the church of the living God*.' 1Ti 3:14-15.

This is the temple that *belongs to the Father*. It is the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth, the place of meeting where Yahweh is.

The mystery of God is godliness

Then he said, 'Without controversy great is *the mystery of godliness*: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up in glory.' 1Ti 3:16.

Through this word, we are understanding the mystery of God. The mystery of God is being proclaimed to us at the moment, and we are seeing it.

The mystery of God is godliness.

Our culture of godliness; our conduct reformed

As we understand it more and more, godliness is becoming our culture. We know how to conduct ourselves in the household of God as we receive the word of the presbytery.

The evidence of our receiving this word is that our conduct will change.

It is being reformed, because we are progressively being changed into the image of the Son with whom we are crucified; with whom we are being fashioned and built together as a body.

Our conduct in the truth will be reproach to others

The receiving of this word, and the obedience that leads to this reformation, will draw *reproach* from others.

In the same way that Jesus confessed that truth, and drew reproach from the whole earth, we, who are turning from that and being joined to Him, like the thief on the cross with Him, will draw that same reproach.

The evidence of receiving this word is that our conduct will be reformed, and it will draw

reproach from those who hate Christ, who hate His messengers, and hate His word.

Resurrection life through connection to Christ's death; our participation in the *agape* meal

The alternative to living by that word is 'a form of godliness' which has no resurrection power to it. It denies fellowship in His offering and sufferings. Living by 'a form of godliness' denies resurrection power.

People who hold to another gospel don't deny that their other gospel has no power.

The fact is that the only power, or 'grace, grace', is resurrection life from the Father. To have resurrection life, we have to 'die'.

How else do we know whether it is resurrection life, unless we are 'coming back from the death of sin with Jesus'?

The form of godliness that denies its power denies that we need to have resurrection life in order to be acceptable. The alternative is a form of godliness that has no resurrection power to it.

The only way that we obtain resurrection life is through *connection to His death*, which is our participation in the tribulations and persecutions that arise because of the word.

This is the 'stony ground' crisis for us.

The culture of godliness, which we are learning by receiving the word of grace through submission to the headship of Christ, is demonstrated in the way that we participate in the *agape* meal, and as we journey with Christ each day in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

Delighting in the headship of Christ

Praise the Lord! I don't know about you, but I'm just so thankful for the invitation to be built on that Foundation; to hear the call to come out to Him, bearing His reproach, which means to come to Him *as living stones being built on that Foundation*.

I am delighting in the headship of Christ which has 'grace, grace' spoken to it, which is the resurrection life that is coming to me and my family as we journey with Christ every day in the fellowship of His body.