

Something for Himself - Part 2

by Jerry Aman

The sermon emphasizes God's desire for a dwelling place and our role as part of His eternal purpose through Christ and the church.

Duration: 1:05:05

Scripture: Matthew 16:15

Topics: "Church Identity", "The Cross"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the revelation of Christ as the cornerstone of the church, highlighting the importance of being living stones built together to form God's temple. It explores the divine revelation needed to understand Christ's identity and the purpose of the church as a dwelling place for God. The sermon stresses the necessity of submitting to the work of the cross to be shaped and chiseled into suitable living stones for God's house.

Transcript

Well, good morning, my brothers and sisters. Good morning, saints. You know, Paul always in his letters, he begins with the grace of the Lord Jesus.

And he calls them saints. Even the Corinthians who had a lot of problems, brothers and sisters, a lot of issues, he called them saints. It was because of grace, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in that he has called us even though we were sinners.

He saved us by his grace and he invites us to his time in his grace this morning. You know, I was encouraged, brothers and sisters, that this matter of the higher plane, the ascended position, our brother spoke about at the table. You know, we spend so much of our time on this earth, very little time in the ascended position, which shouldn't be true of our lives.

I was just thinking, you know, this morning as we come before the Lord Jesus, may we look up that we might see him and then we can look down and see the way he sees and see what he sees and sees the truth. And so let's begin with just a word of prayer this morning. Lord, we just come to you, Lord, I can only ask that, Lord, you would, in your great grace this morning, Lord, supply words that can express the burden on your heart concerning something for yourself and, Lord Jesus, that in your grace we might see Jesus.

In your grace we might see your heart. In your grace, Lord Jesus, we might lay a hold of this something that you want for yourself and, Lord, and by grace be a part of what you've called us to in that great purpose. And, Lord Jesus, we ask you bless this morning as we share with one another the glories of Christ and the glories of the thoughts of God.

We just ask in Jesus' precious name, amen. Well, a little bit of review might be helpful. I was struck as I had listened to the testimonies that came or were given here the week in which I was away at a conference in California and I was really struck by one of the testimonies.

And the testimony went something like this, God is doing something for himself. God is doing something for himself. It's for him, but we are included.

That really struck my heart. And I'd recently actually shared on Christ's heart to dwell among his people and on Bethany an expression of what God was after. And I realized, Lord, I need to reshare these things, maybe from a little different perspective.

And so that's what's on my heart, that we might see that something that God is after and be encouraged by it and be strengthened by it and have more of a revelation of the greatness of Christ and God's great desire to express all the fullness of Christ in the universe. I began, let's turn to Revelation chapter 21. This is one of the key verses, Revelation 21 verses 1 through 3. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there was no more sea.

And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God. The behold, the tabernacle of God is with men.

And then in Matthew 18, I didn't write that scripture down but it's Matthew 18 and I'll get it in a minute. Matthew 18, 20, you've got to remember, he says the tabernacle of God is with men and then when we come to 18, 20, we see for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst. These were the two key verses.

It's interesting that the book of Revelation is the consummation of all of the revelation of Jesus Christ. It's an amazing book and the whole intention of the book of Revelation is that we might have a fuller knowing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not a fuller knowledge but a fuller knowing of him.

As that comes through revelation by the Holy Spirit. You know, the word of God says that the letter kills but the spirit is life. Brothers and sisters, we need the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to see this great thing that God is doing.

Something for himself and I pray that we have the spirit of wisdom and revelation even this morning as we share with one another. The last time I shared it, God has this great eternal purpose and view. In fact, we just sung it in that song.

It says, O gracious God, thy pleasure is in Christ made known. O gracious God, thy pleasure is in Christ made known. That's his pleasure.

That's his joy, is his son Jesus Christ and in Ephesians we find that his great eternal purpose is that in the fullness of time he will sum up all things in Christ. In other words, all of Christ will be expressed. Brothers

and sisters, we only see through a glass dimly now but in that day it will be all the fullness fully revealed.

So glorious will it be. I wonder if we'll be able to stand it, brothers and sisters. Oh, the greatness of Christ that he wants to share with us.

He wants to fully express Christ and he also, brothers and sisters, as we read this scripture in Revelation, we see that there is a connection between the fullness of Christ and a dwelling place for God himself because when he sees a city coming down as a bride adored for his son, the compliment to his son, it says, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with him. These two, this revelation is a great revelation. The church is to be his bride, his compliment, speaks of union life and fullness and full glory knowing the fullness of Christ, speaks of union life.

But it also says that it is to be, the city is his dwelling place, the dwelling place of God. Something for himself, brothers and sisters. God is after something for himself.

But we are included and the reason we are included is God determined in eternity past that he would need a vessel to be able to express in which the life of Christ could be put into and fully express all the glory of the Godhead in Jesus Christ. Now that may sound super spiritual. I don't intend it to be.

It's very practical because that's why you were born. That's why you were created, to be a part of what God is doing in the revealing of fullness of Jesus Christ and for him to have a place to dwell in. So how are we involved in Ephesians 1 chapters 1 verses 22 and 23? It says he is head of the church, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

So in this matter of the fullness of Christ being revealed, it says Christ is head of the church. So we see that this connection of the church and Christ being its head is the vessel of manifestation of the fullness of Christ. In Revelation 21, 2 and 3 which I just read, we see that the church is the complement of Christ, the one that will be with him and serve him in union life.

It takes union life, coming into union with his heart, with his mind, with his purpose and with his character, union life. But it is also the tabernacle of God. A suitable vessel is what God is after, brothers and sisters.

And last week we looked at the tabernacle. The tabernacle was temporary. Much like Christ when he came the first time in his body, it was temporary.

It was where God would be able to dwell in the midst of his people. Now, last time we went through the tabernacle and how it was made and all of the furnishings, not all of them, but we spoke of some of them. The colors, everything about the temple spoke of Christ.

Now brothers and sisters, Moses was the one that was given the directions and the exact plan that God wanted this tabernacle to be made by, to be made. How it was to be made, all of the materials that was to be used, the size of everything, the color of everything, it had to be exact. Moses had been exhorted by God on the mountain when he gave him this pattern.

You know he was up there for 40 days and 40 nights. And I mentioned last time that he received much more than just the Ten Commandments. Obviously it wouldn't take 40 days to receive the Ten Commandments.

But during that time he received all of the pattern for the tabernacle and the services that would be carried on in the tabernacle. And all of the feasts, like the Passover, that are a part of the service of the tabernacle, all of that, all of it speaks of Jesus Christ, the tabernacle. In fact, there's 46 chapters in the Old Testament dedicated to describing the tabernacle, the feast, what's in it, and all of the functions of the priest, 46 chapters.

That's why it took 40 days and 40 nights with Moses on the mountain, brothers and sisters. But everything had to be exact. Moses had no liberty to change anything.

And that's why it took so long. And brothers and sisters, everything about that tabernacle speaks of Christ. And when it was built, the glory of God came down, the presence of God on that tabernacle and appeared as a cloud by day.

And at night it had the appearance of fire in the cloud. And we know that's the very presence of God had come into the tabernacle. It's amazing.

God desired to be in the midst of his people. He desired a tabernacle. It was the only way he could be in the midst of his people, in the only suitable place was the tabernacle.

And it was suitable because everything in it spoke of Christ. It's amazing to me. When he was in that tabernacle, remember when, story straight, Balak wanted to curse the nation of Israel.

And he brought this Gentile prophet, Balaam, and he said, I want you to curse him. And he goes up to a high mountain and he says, look over all the tribes. And he did that because he wanted to see all of the tribes and all of the evil and iniquity that was there in Israel at that time.

And Balaam went to the Lord and the Lord says, I behold no iniquity in Israel. I think that's amazing. It's because he was looking out from the tabernacle.

Do you get it? Brothers and sisters, today we know that there's still sin in us. But Christ, God has, when he looks at us, he looks at us as in Christ. We've been put in Christ.

So when he sees us, he sees us in Christ and beholds no iniquity. That's why we can stand before the Father. It's because of Christ, his shed blood that has brought us into relationship, brothers and sisters, and brought us into that place and God looks, he sees us through his Son.

That's the point. And from the tabernacle, he looked at Israel as through Jesus Christ. So he says, I behold no iniquity.

Amazing, brothers and sisters. This is God's dwelling place, the tabernacle. It speaks of Christ and that's why he was satisfied to dwell there in the tabernacle.

And then we spoke of the temple. And the temple was to be the permanent place. And it speaks of, the tabernacle is really the type of the church on earth today.

It's temporary. But the tabernacle speaks of permanence. It's the heavenly temple.

It's the one we see in Revelation chapter 21, the permanent one, the final one. The one that is fully complete, brothers and sisters. That is what we see in the tabernacle.

And I mentioned that, and really the main point I made last week was that when they were building the tabernacle, God said, I want every family to be a part of it. Who is willing to present a free will offering for the building of the tabernacle. In other words, the tabernacle and later the temple was all built with free will offerings.

God would not take an unwilling offering for the building of his house. That comes down to this, brothers and sisters. If we want to be part of that something that God is doing for himself, we need to be free will offerings unto the God.

We are the material for the church, brothers and sisters, and we should be free will offerings. You really want God to have what he's after. Among us, your enrichment.

Brothers and sisters, we need to offer ourselves to him fully. Free will, Lord I am yours, build me into your house however you desire. That is what we challenged with last week.

Now I mentioned the temple. The temple was even more glorious, of course, than the tabernacle. It was intended to be.

You know, David in his heart for God had seen what God was after. This house for the Lord. And he said, in Psalm 132, I will not give sleep to my eyes until I find a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.

And the Lord's response, this is my rest forever. Here will I dwell, for I have desired it. Brothers and sisters, the first thing David did when he came to the throne was to overthrow Jerusalem, take Jerusalem back for the tribe of Israel.

The second thing he did is he built a tent for the ark to be brought in, and then he went and got the ark, and he did eventually bring it to Jerusalem, the ark representing the presence of God. But God's response to David was, this is my rest forever. Here will I dwell.

I have desired it. It's the place of God's rest, brothers and sisters. And maybe we'll talk more about that some other time.

Now this brings us to the advent of Jesus Christ on this earth, his first coming. When he came, of course, it was mostly religious tradition that was going on rather than a real heart for the Lord. Now there was some heart for the Lord there.

We see it in Simeon, we see it in Anna, who were in the temple, had been praying and waiting for the babe to be brought in. There were some, there were the shepherds in the field, and there were a few others with a real heart for the Lord. But for the most part, they had lost their desire for God and the things of God.

But they were willing to carry out the religious traditions and were depending on them to be their salvation, the works of their own hands. And we know that, brothers and sisters, even with Abraham, we realize that it is by faith and not by works. Well, it was, the temple was there.

There was no ark. The presence of God was not there. But brothers and sisters, God did have his dwelling place among men.

Christ was God's temple. Christ in that earthly body was God's temple. And we know from Ephesians that all of the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily, it says, in that physical body of our Lord Jesus

Christ.

In fact, the Lord said, destroy this temple, speaking of his body, and I will raise it up in three days, speaking of his resurrection. God did have his house. God did have his resting place while Jesus was on earth.

And the glory of God dwelt in Christ. But it was veiled to men because of his fleshly body. In other words, all that glory could not be manifested in that physical body.

Now, we do know that when he took Peter, James, and John up to the mount, that mountain we call the Mount of Transfiguration, that Moses and Elijah and Jesus appeared before them on the mountain. And it says that Christ's body began to be transformed and a brilliant light began to shine forth. That glory that was in there, in that fleshly body, veiled by that body, was beginning to shine forth and out.

And Peter made the mistake, but it was a good lesson to learn for all of us. Peter said, Lord, I'm going to make a tabernacle, a shady place for you here, for Elijah and Moses and for you. A cloud covered them.

God spoke from the cloud. He says, This is my Son, whom I am well pleased. Listen to him.

And then the cloud lifted, and when they looked around, Elijah and Moses was gone. And it says only Jesus was there. You see the point? You see God's heart? It's His Son, the manifestation of His glory.

Brothers and sisters, that's what He's after. But that physical body did limit Him in space and in time. His physical body, while He was on earth, was not the permanent temple of God that God was after.

In fact, the Lord Jesus said, I have a baptism to be baptized with, and I am straightened, closed in, until it be accomplished. He was speaking of His release through Calvary, where He would be released from that physical body and eventually have that spiritual body that He so needed. His physical body on earth was suitable for God, a place, a resting place, but it was not sufficient to manifest all His glory.

Now I want to be very clear here. The body He had while He was on earth, that physical body, was not only suitable, but it was sufficient to carry out the plan of redemption. That physical body was very important.

Remember last time I spoke about the ark in the tabernacle. It is Christ, and in that ark was the law. The law speaks of the truth of God.

Jesus Christ said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. Now the point I am getting at here is that in John chapter 1, it says we beheld His glory. The glory is the only begotten of the Son, full of grace and truth.

Now all of the glory was not manifest, but man could see the grace and truth of God in Jesus Christ. The grace that came down, Christ is God's grace to us, and He is the truth, as He said, and in the ark was the pot of manna. Christ declared, I am the manna coming down from heaven.

I am the bread of life. Aaron's rod that budded was in the ark. It represents resurrection life.

Brothers and sisters, Christ said very plainly, I am the resurrection and the life. This was manifest in His body when He was here on earth, and in that body, we know that He received many stripes. He was beaten almost to the point of death.

His body was so marred, you could not recognize who He was, and the word of God says by His stripes we are healed. So in that body, He received the stripes, brothers and sisters, and it says those stripes healed us of our condition. The wounds He received in His hands and His feet, the word of God says He was wounded for our transgressions.

That was done in that physical body. That body hung on the tree, and men spit upon it and ridiculed Him there. He was rejected in that physical body.

In that body, we know that the judgment of God came upon Him and for the sins of the world. It says in that body, the sins of the world came upon our Lord Jesus Christ. He became sin in that body, brothers and sisters.

So that body that He carried was sufficient for the work of Calvary, for the work that was to be done, for the redemption of mankind. That body was so necessary, but it was temporary. Brothers and sisters, in that body He took on the sins of the world.

Praise God, that body is no longer here. That's what the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord means, that we have died with Him in Christ. The sinner has been taken into death, and we are raised in newness of life, resurrection life.

So in that sense, the body was sufficient. But in the sense of revealing all of His glory, it was not. It would take more than that.

It would take the church, brothers and sisters, the body of Jesus Christ. In fact, our brother this morning, when he read out of Ephesians 3.19, he was talking about being filled with all the fullness of Christ. The context of that is the church, the body of Christ.

And it ends with unto Him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ. So the vessel is the church, the body of Jesus Christ. Brothers, this is what God, something He is doing for Himself.

It was not a permanent temple, the physical body of our Lord Jesus Christ. But brothers and sisters, He was looking for that release at Calvary that would bring about the spiritual body that He so needed in order that all of the glory of the Godhead could be manifest. It was suitable for redemption, but not suitable to manifest all that God wanted to in that physical body.

I hope we see this. I shared this in California, and a brother came up to me. I just don't see it.

I couldn't help him. I was sorry. I couldn't help him.

But I will share it with you, and may the Lord open our eyes. Jesus Christ is still the temple of God. He is still the temple of God.

He is the head, and we are His body. He is the chief cornerstone, and we are the living stones built upon the chief cornerstone, His spiritual body. It explains 1 Corinthians 12.12. We need to look at that real quick.

1 Corinthians 12.12. The Lord is speaking about the gifts in the body, and He says, For as the body is one, just one body, there are not many bodies, just one body, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body. So is the church. That isn't what it says, is it? It's describing the church, isn't it? Aren't we many members, one in Christ? But it doesn't say that.

But it says, So also is Christ. Brothers and sisters, Christ is still the temple. Now let me give a little more explanation, because this is what the brother couldn't get.

This temple of God, Christ, He is still the temple. He is the head, and we are the body. Now I see my brother William out here.

He has two distinct parts. He has a head, and he has a body. But when we think of William, we don't think of William the head and William the body.

We just call him William, right? It's one person. They're so unified. Now, they have two different functions.

His head is what does the thinking, and the reasoning, and the willing. But the body is what carries out what the head desires. Now fortunately, William has two new knees, so he can do that much better than he used to be able to.

His head used to say, let's get up, and those knees just didn't want to do it. But now he can. Thank the Lord, William.

Hope you're not offended by me using you. But that's the picture we have, the head and the body. They're one.

It's Christ. That's why in Corinthians it says, so is Christ. He is still the temple of God.

I hope the Lord will reveal to us how glorious this is, because we are a part of this glory. Thank God. Well, on earth, his body was a veil, much like a lampshade on a bright light.

You got that 100 watt bulb in the lampshade, and you take the lampshade off, you can't even look at it. It's so bright. But with the shade on there, the light diffuses, and you can see.

I don't know how to describe. It's impossible to describe how glorious Christ is and what we've come into. But let's look at Colossians chapter 1 a moment.

Colossians chapter 1 now, starting verse 15. In Colossians 1 verse 15 we have this glorious description from Paul. He's seen the glorious Christ, and he has this description of Christ as the creator.

And listen to what he says. He is the image, the visible image of God. He is the firstborn of every creature.

In other words, all comes out of Jesus Christ. For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist, glorious.

And then it says, and he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have preeminence. This glorious description included in this is him as the creator. He speaks of Christ being head of the church.

In other words, the church was not an afterthought after Calvary. It was an eternity past. It's always been in God's heart.

Christ the head, the church's body. Brothers and sisters, I think it's interesting that this is emphasized in the context of this description of Christ the creator. Now let's look at Ephesians 1, starting with 21, verse 21.

We can even do verse 20, go back to 20. Verse 20, talking about the power that works in us, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and sat him at his own right hand in heavenly places, for above every principality, power, might, dominion that is named, every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And he has put all things under his feet and given him to be head over the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

This is a description of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ. He has come through death. He's ascended to the throne, and God has exalted him as king of kings and Lord of lords.

And in this description, it says that he is head over all things to the church, which is his body. Do you see what he's getting at? The fullness of him that fills all in all. This is something for himself, something that God is doing, speaks of all the glories of Christ.

What we see in Revelation 21, we see this dwelling place that God has so desired that it will so manifest all the fullness of his son. We see it completed. We see it in its fullness, brothers and sisters.

And the great announcement, and it was an announcement, a great voice saying the tabernacle of God is with men. I don't know how to tell you how important that is. As I mentioned before, the book of Revelation sums up everything in Christ.

It's a summation of all the revelation that we have through all of the other 65 books of the Bible. It's summed up in this. And in this scripture, we see this something that God is after, this something that is so on his heart, this bride adorned for his son and his dwelling place forever.

How important this is to God is really hard for us to understand. In a very small way, with our children, we want them to grow up and to be expressions of a perfect person, so to speak. We know all their flaws and everything else, but Christ, there's no imperfection, there's just beauty there, and God is so pleased with his son.

Like I say, he broke through heaven, he spoke through the cloud to Peter, James, and John. He said, this is my son, whom I'm well pleased. Listen to him.

And then everybody else disappears but the son. You know, that's what God is after. Let me explain a little more about how we're involved.

Brothers and sisters, I have this one example, and I've used it here before, but I'm going to use it again because it's one of the best that I ever came across, and it was from Brother Sparks. I don't know where he got it from, but you know, in Revelation, it speaks of a sea of crystal before the throne. It says, like the sea of crystal.

Brothers and sisters, everything in that temple, in the tabernacle in Revelation, it's precious stones, isn't it? The foundation is made of precious stones. The gates are gates of pearl coming out of the suffering of Christ. There's this crystal sea.

Everything, reflections of Christ. Well, crystal is an interesting thing because if you shine a light through crystal, it diffuses the light. Now, in school, somewhere in high school, you may have done that experiment where you shine a light through the prism, remember? We used to do that in the old days.

Do y'all still do that? You've never done it. That's so sad. So sad.

You've lost a lot. You take and shine that light through the glass prism, what comes out? All the colors. It's like a rainbow.

Now, actually, a rainbow is the same principle. The sunlight shining through the water crystals in the clouds, the light goes in. It's a bright, brilliant light, but coming out, it's diffused, and what you end up seeing is the rainbow.

All the colors. Now, you may or may not have learned this, but white light is not a color in itself. White is not a color.

It's made up of all the colors. It is a combination of all the colors. It's inclusive of everything, but when you diffuse it through a crystal, all the colors in that bright light come out, and it's visible and can be seen, all the fullness of Christ.

He is that bright, brilliant glory of God, brothers and sisters. They could not look upon that glory, and that's why it was veiled in that physical body. But in the spiritual body, it's not going to be veiled.

Brothers and sisters, that brilliant light will be shined through the living stones, through the crystal, where crystal will be crystal like, no flaws, and all the beauties of Christ will be expressed. That's why, brothers and sisters, no one person could possibly take on all the fullness of Christ and reveal it. Now we have the complete Christ in us, I know that, but he reveals himself in different ways in each one of us, that all the fullness might be there.

But it has to be one body. It has to be white light, many colors. In the church, the body of Christ, God's resting place, his house, his temple, brothers and sisters, is both suitable for God to dwell in, and sufficient to manifest the glory of Christ.

Now we know that we're not yet sufficient, because there's so many flaws that the light really gets blocked, but the Lord's working on that, isn't he? He gave his life, it says, and he's washing it with his word to remove all the spots and wrinkles, and one day it will be a glorious church. That's what he's doing today. I pray that the Lord will open our eyes to see the great centrality of Christ in God's heart, the immensity of Christ and the place that he takes.

Brothers and sisters, salvation that we receive is glorious, but it's only the doorway into what God is after in saving us, to be a part of this great thing that he's doing for himself. Now the Lord did give revelation to the disciples of the church, but it's only mentioned twice, and the reason for that is it really took the work of the cross for it to really become able to share and see it as the disciples saw it. But he did give a revelation.

First in Matthew chapter 16, upon this rock I will build my church, he says. It's a church universal. It's all the Christians in all of the world through all of the ages that precede us and that will come behind us.

And second place is in Matthew 18, where a brother's been offended and he's been told, okay, you need to go to the brothers, you need to talk to them, and you need to work this thing out and the church needs to make a judgment. It's the local church. It's where he talks about binding and loosening, binding the things that are not of Christ and loosening the things that are.

And in Matthew 18 he declares, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst. Boy, what have we been brought into, brothers and sisters? This revelation was preparatory for

them to understand what was about to occur at Pentecost and the birth of the church because they had not seen it before this time. Let's look at Peter's revelation a minute.

Let's go to Matthew 16, verses 15 through 18, Matthew 16, verses 15 through 18. And he said to them, well, let's start with verse 13, last part, whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And his disciples said, some say you are John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. And he said to them, but whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter said, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto thee but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. This is the second place that he gave this revelation.

Now, brothers and sisters, this was an epic event in Peter's life and in the disciples' life. Their eyes were really opened to see who Christ was and to see all the fullness that he intended to be in this matter of the church. You know, it says in here that blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven.

You know, Peter and the disciples, they knew that he was the Son of God. But actually John the Baptist had declared he was the Son of God. And they had heard John.

And there were other times in the scripture as you read, they'll realize he's the Son of God but it doesn't make the impact until we get here. You know how the Lord deals with us in Revelation a lot of times. He builds up to it.

You get these little thoughts, these hints, and you begin to see a little piece here and there. And all of a sudden, one day, it's all put together. There's this revel, you see it and you say, wow, before I kind of was understanding but now I see.

And that's what happens here. Well, you know, the problem they had was they had been with Jesus all this time. They had been to the Sermon on the Mount.

They saw all the miracles. They believed he was the one, the Messiah. They believed that.

In fact, their vision had been clouded by the fact that they expected him to overthrow the Roman government and become king. And a couple of them, one would get to sit at his right hand and one is left and rule over Judea. Well, of course, that is not what God had in his heart in his first coming at all.

But that's what clouded their ability to really see. And the Lord is dealing with that. And the Lord, interestingly enough, he gets their attention by saying, whom do men say that I am? He gets their attention first.

He has to do that with us. And they try to answer him kindly, you know, being compared to Elijah and John the Baptist. And the Lord said, he goes to the heart, who do you say I am? Now brothers and sisters, that's the question every man, every woman will have to answer.

Whom do you say that Jesus is? I call it that question of the ages. Whom say you that I am? It's personal. It's not a general question.

It's personal. It goes right to the heart. Who am I? The Messiah, a man, a prophet, a great man? Much more than that.

He is the Christ, the anointed one, the sent one, the Messiah. But he's also the Son of God. And the Lord's response to Peter, his entry, he said, blessed are thou, Simon and Jonah, Barjona, he calls him by his given name, Simon the son of Jonah, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father which is in heaven.

You see, now it comes, this great revelation from the Father. Brothers and sisters, we can receive a lot of information about the Lord, but one day we have to have revelation to see it in the light of the Holy Spirit and it opens the word to us and it becomes alive to us and it becomes alive to Peter. The Lord says, you know, flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you.

You just didn't learn this from other men. It had to be shown to you from my Father. Brothers and sisters, it is a heavenly, divine revelation that we all need to see who Christ is.

And he uses Simon's given name, Simon Barjona. But then I think it's very interesting. He addresses Peter again.

He doesn't use the name Simon Barjona. Now the Lord, when he first met Peter, he said, Simon, I'm going to call you Peter. So it wasn't a strange name to Peter.

But here it's interesting how emphatic the Lord is in his address to Peter. He says, Thou art a saint unto you, Thou art Peter. You are a stone, Peter.

You are a living stone. The Lord emphasizes it. Your life has changed, Peter, as a result of this revelation.

You are now a living stone. You have been hewn out of Christ, the chief cornerstone. And you are a little stone.

There's a great transition from Peter being a disciple to becoming a living stone in the house of God. No longer just a disciple, but a living stone. Upon this rock, in other words, upon this revelation of me, the massive rock, as Lance used to say, the massive rock, I can't say it like Lance did, massive rock, yeah.

That's the way he did it, right? Massive rock. Anyway, it's Christ, Christ is the massive rock. I am the chief cornerstone of this building, and I'm going to build my church.

In other words, what he was saying to Peter was, Peter, for all who receive this revelation from the Father, that I am the Christ, the Son of the living God, that qualifies them, brings them in to the matter that they are living stones, and all who have this revelation and are hewn out of me are living stones, and I'm going to take all of these living stones and build them together into a house, the church of God, a dwelling place for the Father. This revelation began with a revelation of who Jesus Christ is. I am the Christ, the Son of the living God.

But the Lord expands that revelation. It gets larger, and he says, upon this rock, I will build my church, the revelation of the church, the body of Jesus Christ, the temple of God. I will build this church out of living stones quarried out of me and built together.

These are not two separate revelations. They are two aspects of one revelation. Now did Peter get it? First Peter 2, 4 and 5, to whom coming as unto a living stone, ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual

house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices.

This revelation is in two parts. First, he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. You have to see that to become a disciple.

Second, part of that revelation is to see that he is the massive rock and that you are a living stone and you need to be built together so God can have his temple. I want to emphasize you must be built together. I shared this before, but brothers and sisters, a field full of stones is not a house, is it? No matter how polished they are, how beautiful they may be, if they are just sitting in a field all to themselves, brothers and sisters, it is not a house.

They have to be built together. If you are building a house of stone and you call up Lux Quarry and say, deliver me 30 loads of stones, and he comes and they dump them in a pile on your lot, your building lot, you still don't have a house. All the stones are piled together.

They become a congregation of stones, but they are not built together and they are not the house that God desires. Brothers and sisters, that is why the cross has to work on these living stones. We have to willingly submit to the cross in our lives.

All the dust and the dirt on the stones have to be removed. They have to be shaped and chiseled. It's the work of the cross in our lives.

We've got to be shaped and chiseled and worked on our soul in such a way that we really fit with one another and only the Lord through the Holy Spirit can do this work. Brothers and sisters, this is the difficult part for living stones. It's being chipped and chiseled and made ready and placed in the house of God.

Now interestingly enough, the way the Lord is doing it, He's placed us in and He's chiseling at the same time and He's working on us and saying, hey, you don't quite fit right yet. I've got to work on that little part of your soul life that has not yet been dealt with. I've got to knock this corner off.

Brothers and sisters, He does that as He's putting us together. Sometimes He uses one another to help do this work. We must be, brothers and sisters, willing to submit to the work of the cross.

Before I said we are free will offerings and unless you are a free will offering to the Lord, unlikely you will submit to the cross. You just don't want it. You're not up for it.

Brothers and sisters, we do need to offer ourselves. Then the Lord makes a very authoritative statement. He said, I will build my church.

Brothers and sisters, that is infallible. That is irreversible. God will build His church.

He's doing it today. We need to trust Him that He will. It may look disastrous to us in its current condition and it is, but the Lord said I will build my church and He's going to do it.

It is His will. Now the question I have, is His will our will? Are we in union with Him in will? I will build my church. He is the architect.

He is the supplier. The Holy Spirit is the contractor working on the materials and we are the materials. We are living material.

That is why it is necessary that we willingly offer ourselves because we're living. There is a fierce spiritual opposition to Christ building His church. That's why there's been so much difficulty in building the church of God.

In fact, He says the gates of hell have opened wide coming against the building of my church. He uses this opposition to actually build us up and to strengthen us. But He said, be aware.

The gates of hell will try to prevail, but I will not let it prevail. Brothers and sisters, in the second mention of the church, He says in Matthew 18, where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst. He's in the midst, brothers and sisters, dealing with all that is contrary to His character and His nature and that all has to be dealt with in our lives.

Sometimes people don't understand the glory that we've come into and the Lord being in our midst, two or three in our midst. But He said, be aware of this because wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, committed together, to be built together, to allow the cross to work in their lives so that the house of God can be built, all hell will come against it. Brothers and sisters, it is for Him.

It is for Him. Two or three gathered in my name. That's the real church.

You know, there's a concept, I'll finish in just a second. There's a concept out there, unfortunately, that says you don't really need to be together. You don't really need to be built together.

Here's the way it works. You know, if I run into you on the street and we have a little conversation about Christ and the church is built up and we can encourage one another. Well, brothers and sisters, that is kind of true in a universal sense.

But brothers and sisters, I have brothers in other parts of the world, brothers and sisters, some of which I know. But honestly, I can't be built together with them. However, I do know that when the life of Christ is built up in me and built up in the assembly in Richmond, it affects my brothers and sisters because we're universally joined in Christ.

That is all true. But the building up work has to be done in the local assembly. Brothers and sisters, we can't just be individuals running around, bumping into other Christians, getting a little, what is it, the honeybees? Not the honeybees.

Yeah, the bees get our flowers, whatever it is, the nectar. You know, they just go around getting all the nectar they can. But they're not being built up together.

Well, it's a wrong concept and actually destroys the house of God. Let me end with this point. We need to be free will offerings that God can have this something that he's after.

God is after something for himself. Brothers and sisters, I am so glad that he has included us. I'm so glad, brothers and sisters, I think that for most of us, not only have we had a revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, I think we've also had something of a revelation that he is the massive rock, the cornerstone out of which we have been here.

And we have become living stones. And we're not going to be any good laying in a field somewhere. We need to be built together.

Lord, we just come to you this day. We thank you for this glorious thing that you're doing for yourself. It is our desire, too, that Christ be manifested in fullness.

And Lord, it's our desire that among us, even with all our flaws, that you could be pleased to dwell. Lord, just like you dwelt in that tabernacle, and you looked, and you looked out, and you saw your son, Christ, and you said, I see no iniquity there. All you saw was the glory of Christ.

I'm thankful, Father, for your glorious plans, for your glorious redemption. But Lord, we've been redeemed with a purpose. And Lord, I want your purpose to be fulfilled.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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