

Isaiah 28.16
21 Feb 2010

Dearly beloved brethren, today we are gathered to dedicate this place unto the glory of God. And we glorify God through the use of this place for the preaching of the gospel. All the facilities: the Covenant Instruction classes, the pantry, fellowship rooms for the support of this one ministry of the proclamation of God's Word. And this place can only be dedicated to God as the people who occupy the place and so you and I are also to be dedicated to God: that we give our entire lives unto God to serve Him and we use our gifts to edify the people of God. Isaiah 25 to 27 ends on a positive note, and then in chapter 28 we have God's judgment upon Israel and Judah. Israel is in a bad spiritual condition, here given as the crown of pride and drunkards of Ephraim, referring to Israel, the Northern Kingdom. They gave themselves to drink and were addicted to it and as a result of their sin, the Lord will send the Assyrians against Israel and Israel will be trodden under foot and will be like a fading flower. But Judah, her sister is no better, especially in her leaders, priests and prophets. They have erred through strong drink, and so they err in vision and stumble in judgment and so they mislead God's people. And this leads to the people despising the Word of God. And they trust in their own man-made covenant so that death and hell will not hurt them.

Verse 16 begins with the word, "therefore". God is saying to Judah, because of your wickedness I will lay a foundation stone in Zion. And you will know that you have put your trust in the wrong covenant. For the godly, their comfort will be in the way of trusting in this stone and the result is that they will find peace with God and will not fear any evil that will come upon them. The Lord wants us to put our trust on this foundation stone at Zion. That Zion is the church and that stone is Christ. The Lord knows that we often put our trust in other things besides God, and that is idolatry. We put our trust in money, properties, and charismatic personalities. And we must also know that Christ alone build and restores the church because He alone is the foundation stone. Therefore, let us hear the Word of the Lord in Isaiah 28, verse 16, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, behold I lay in Zion for a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste".

The theme is LAYING A FOUNDATION STONE IN ZION. . First, we consider the stone that is laid. Secondly, the laying of that foundation and finally, the significance of that stone.

First, the Stone that is laid. The stone in Scripture is always spoken in judgment upon the ungodly in contrast to the salvation of God's people. In Psalm 118.22, 23, "the stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it *is* marvellous in our eyes". And in the New Testament, Jesus quotes Psalm 118.22, 23 when He said in Matthew 21.42, "Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" And Peter addresses these words to the Jews in Acts 4.11, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner". And the apostle Paul in Romans 9.33, takes Isaiah 28.16 to show that reprobate Israel has stumbled at the cornerstone. And in I Peter 2.6-8, Peter shows that the stone is a rock of offence, those

who are disobedient to the Word and unto such a condemnation were they appointed. Therefore, Jesus, Paul and Peter quote the words of our text as a word of judgement. Thus, the word of Isaiah in our text is a word of judgment for the people in Judah has put their misplaced hope and trust in the covenant of death and hell, and they imagine that they will not be touched by them when the Assyrians come upon them. Who is that Stone? That Stone is the God of the covenant as He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ is the full revelation of God in the Scriptures and He is the foundation stone, of whom Isaiah speaks. And the proof of it is in Acts 4.10, 11 before the religious leaders, Peter identified and interpreted that stone which the builders refused is Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom the Jews have crucified. And only by Christ shall men be saved. What does Scripture say about this stone? Firstly, the stone is for a foundation. The foundation of the building is the first stone that is laid in the construction of a building. It is right-angled so that the two sides of the building take reference to the cornerstone. And so is Christ who is first in the counsel of God. And God is pleased to establish His covenant and build His Church. And by this stone the strength of the entire foundation and the stability of the entire building are dependent upon that stone. The text says that the stone is a sure foundation. This is a foundation that is rock solid and will not collapse like the school buildings in the Sichuan earthquake. What Judah chose for a foundation was not rock solid but will crumble when the Assyrians come to attack them. They have put their trust in something that will not last. But, Christ is that sure foundation. Take him away from the building and the whole building crumbles for He is the basis of that building. Christ is that rock on which the church is built and nothing, including the gates of hell shall be able prevail against it.

Secondly, that stone is tried. That foundation is proven to be able to bear the entire building. Take away Christ from the church, and the church ceases to be a true church of Jesus Christ. Christ is that tried stone came in the way of trial. God in His counsel has tried and approved Christ in the way of His suffering and death. He proved to be without sin though He was tempted of the devil in the mount of temptation. And even godless Pilate could not lay any charge against Christ and twice declared that he found no fault of Christ that is worthy of death. And on the cross, Christ was tested in bearing God's righteous wrath against sin. He passed the test when He came forth as the living foundation in his resurrection and exaltation. And so, Christ is our foundation who is reliable for our salvation. And we together with the Old Testament saints have found him to our only foundation, without whom there is no salvation. Trusting only in him for our salvation by faith alone and He grants us eternal life and brings us to be with God in heaven.

Finally, that stone is precious. This means that that stone is of the highest value. This stone is of great value because He is God's own Son. What more precious stone to build his church could God possibly choose? And by his death on the cross, He shed the precious blood, which alone is able to atone for the sins of his people. Because Christ is the Son of God, He is the object of God's favour, greatly beloved of the Father and indeed precious. The question is: is he so precious to you so that you will not trade him in for anything that the world could offer?

And this stone must be laid. God lays this stone, for He says, I lay a foundation a stone. Here God identifies himself as Adonai Yahweh or God Jehovah. Yahweh or Jehovah is the covenant name of God. And the covenant God, he wants to save his

people and the only way is by laying a foundation. The emphasis is upon the “I” myself, Adonai Jehovah lay a foundation. Wicked Judah has been putting their trust in their covenant of death and hell, which is no foundation at all. Here God says, therefore, I lay a foundation which is tried, precious and sure. This means that the stone would be a judgement for wicked Judah and a great comfort to God’s people because in spite of the spiritual condition of Judah, God will build and restore Judah. And God draws attention to what He is going to do. He says, “behold”, which means, “look and see”. I am going to work in Judah; I will lay foundation in Zion. Zion refers to the mountain on which the city of Jerusalem is situated. This is where the temple of God is situated, and where God dwells with His people. And Zion refers to the church where there is the two-fold seed of the elect and the reprobate. And so God will lay Christ as the foundation of the Church – how is God going to do that? Firstly, God fulfils this prophecy when His Son came and is laid as the foundation stone in Zion. Secondly, according to God’s revelation, the cornerstone has become the ground and foundation of the life of the church. God lays Christ as the foundation stone of revealed truth.

How do we understand the timing of the laying of this stone? The truth is that God has already laid the stone at Zion. Then, how can this stone be Christ since He will come after the times of Isaiah? The answer is that the decree of God goes back to eternity. What God has decreed in eternity is as good as accomplished in the mind of God.

This laying of this stone is accomplished in time, that is the coming of Jesus Christ in his incarnation. As the foundation of His people, Christ is laid first in God’s counsel as the head of his people. God has determined from eternity to save unto Himself a people through his Son. And to that end the Son of God came in the likeness of sinful flesh, born of a woman so that he might take upon himself the guilt and curse of his people and redeem those who are under the curse. He was born under the law so that he might take away the curse of the law and fulfill the law on behalf of his people who were under the law. And for this purpose God sends his son into the depths of death. This building must be founded upon perfect justice and righteousness: God cannot deny himself and in harmony of his own being, nothing less than the perfect satisfaction of his justice on behalf of his people will suffice. Therefore, Christ must obtain and merit that righteousness. Christ becomes the cornerstone of God’s building in his suffering and death and for that building and it alone, he suffered and died. Further, God confirmed that He accepted the sacrifice of His son when God raised Christ from the dead and receiving him into heavenly glory and set him at the right hand of God. And God gave to Christ, the Spirit by whom the foundation of the church is laid.

God also lays the foundation from the viewpoint of revelation, which Christ is the ground and foundation of the life of the church. God’s people must know this son through the knowledge and confidence of faith. They must know who He is, and they must put all their confidence in Him. And to that end God reveals Christ as the cornerstone throughout the Scriptures. He does so through the prophets and apostles, and through the inspired Scriptures. The prophets, especially Isaiah points to Christ in types and shadows. All the types and shadows in the Old Testament meets in Christ for He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes in Him (Rom. 10.4). And as such He is the cornerstone.

The significance of this stone, negatively, it is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. According to the verses before the text, the people, especially the leaders were living in lust and drunkenness. They trampled on God's law and his righteousness, walking in disobedience and wickedness. They mock the word of the prophet and they reject the cornerstone, the Christ of God. What God calls precious, they disallow and refuse. And they go on to make a covenant with death and hell, defying the judgement of God and contradicting the coming doom prophesied by Isaiah. And the result of their wickedness is that they will fall into eternal condemnation. They stumble over the cornerstone because they refused to believe in Him. And they will be hardened unto their own condemnation.

Positively, God's cornerstone is a stone that we put our faith in. We are built upon him by faith, which is the bond, which God unites us to Christ and builds as living stones upon this foundation stone. This faith is looking away from self but relying upon Christ alone for He is the rock of our righteousness and salvation. And when we put our trust in Him, we do not make haste. We are not impatient for the fulfillment of this prophecy at the final coming of Christ, but patiently wait for it, knowing that it is for an appointed time and will not tarry, for God will hasten it in his own time. Thus, there is no fear in our hearts. But, we shall be safely and calmly wait for God's judgements for we know that when the Lord comes, we will not be ashamed nor disappointed because we are built upon Christ, God's sure and precious foundation stone.

What then is God's Word to CERC, as we dedicate this place for the Lords' work? Firstly, God builds and restores the church by placing the foundation, which is Christ. And to him alone we must look and to look to anyone else is gross idolatry and displeasing in the sight of God. Do you look to anyone besides Christ for the salvation of CERC? Secondly, Let your confidence be only in the Lord. Believe in Him and trust in Him alone for your salvation, you and your children and children's children. He alone is the foundation stone in Zion. Amen.