

Time to Rebuild, Part 3
January 15, 2017

Important messages: Thank people for taking down lights and cleaning up the broken fountain.

I Last week

A) **SLIDE** **Isaiah 28:15-17 (NIV)** ¹⁵ You boast, "We have entered into a covenant with death, with the grave [sheol or hell] we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place." ¹⁶ So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. ¹⁷ I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place.

B) **SLIDE** Israel and this nation

- 1) When Israel treated God as just another god, God removed His hand
- 2) This allowed Israel's enemies to take over Israel, destroy the temple, tear down the walls, and weaken God's word by infusing it with false beliefs
- 3) The people continued to call on God, but, as a nation, they did not serve Him
- 4) **Psalm 33:12 (NIV)** ¹² Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance.
- 5) When we remove the LORD as God, then the blessings stop
- 6) **SLIDE** For Israel, the beginning of the restoration process began with the rebuilding of the temple
- 7) Unlike Israel, however, we do not have a physical temple, though that would make the process much easier
- 8) Instead, our spiritual "temple" is built on the Word of God and has been torn down

- 9) Over the years we have seen a systematic dismantling of the roots of our Christian faith
- 10) Like Israel, we have become vulnerable
 - a) We are losing our identity as a nation
 - b) We are witnessing the removal of God from this nation and from our daily lives
 - c) Divisions grow daily
- 11) How do we turn this around?

II Lay the foundation again

A) Ezra

- 1) **SLIDE Ezra 1:5 (NIV)** ⁵ Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites--**everyone** whose heart God had moved--prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem.
- 2) **SLIDE Ezra 3:1 (NIV)** ¹ When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, **the people assembled as one man** in Jerusalem.
- 3) **SLIDE Ezra 3:3 (NIV)** ³ **Despite their fear of the peoples around them**, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices.
- 4) **SLIDE Ezra 3:10-13 (NIV)** ¹⁰ When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD...¹¹ With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. ¹² But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. ¹³ No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.

B) **SLIDE** United States

- 1) As we said earlier, unlike Israel, we do not have a physical temple to rebuild
- 2) When Ezra returned to Israel, the rebuilding began by taking one stone at a time, cleaning it, repairing it, making sure it would fit with the other stones
- 3) The stones were not thrown away for newer, better stones
- 4) The new foundation would consist of the original stones
- 5) For us, we are the stones that God will use to rebuild the spiritual foundation
- 6) **SLIDE 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)** ¹⁹ Do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit**, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.
- 7) **SLIDE 1 Peter 2:4-5 (NIV)** ⁴ As you come to him, the living Stone--**rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him**-- ⁵ you also, like living stones, **are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood**, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- 8) **SLIDE 1 Peter 2:9-10 (NIV)** ⁹ But **you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God**, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

C) **SLIDE** Process

- 1) To restore this nation, God will restore the foundation of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, which is our spiritual temple
- 2) To restore the spiritual temple, God will restore the stones
- 3) To restore the stones, Jesus will start with us

D) **SLIDE** Return to Elijah

- 1) **1 Kings 19:9-10 (NIV)** ⁹ There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."
- 2) Elijah, like each of us, is a living stone
- 3) However, Elijah no longer saw himself as part of God's plan
- 4) He thought he was alone, and he could not stand alone
- 5) The enemy had deceived him into believing that he was no longer connected, no longer needed
- 6) Therefore, before God could use Elijah, God had to restore Elijah
- 7) God had to bring Elijah back to his roots and reestablish his relationship with God and with other believers
- 8) God's plans are massive because they involve every tongue, tribe and nation
- 9) Compared to those plans that encompass the beginning and the end of all things, we may see ourselves as but one grain of sand on the beach
- 10) And who would miss a grain of sand
- 11) While we may be a single grain, each of us was created by Jesus Christ for Jesus Christ

E) Cornerstone

- 1) Last week, I shared that I had found myself standing next to Elijah
- 2) I felt alone because of all the difficulties we are experiencing
- 3) I could not fix what I felt were the problems
- 4) I began to think that the best thing for Cornerstone would be for me step aside

- 5) But, then I realized that I needed to be restored just as Elijah needed it

F) **SLIDE** Next step

- 1) The attacks of the enemy are meant to weaken the bond between us, the living stones
- 2) When I asked Jesus what returning to our roots meant, He said, "Fellowship!"
- 3) Before we can impact this city, this state, or this nation, each of us needs to be restored to his or her proper place
- 4) No person is meant to stand alone. No one!
- 5) Take a moment. Do you feel as close to other stones as you used to? Or as you want to?
- 6) Are there people here whom you do not know?
- 7) Have you seen attacks on your relationships at home, at work, at church?
- 8) Do you see your actions as affecting only you and not the body of Christ?
- 9) Cornerstone was built on the fellowship of believers
- 10) So, we need to restore that fellowship
- 11) Fellowship dinners. Celebrating the feasts. Valentine's Banquet. Game night. Bible study. Dinner after Wednesday evenings. Sunday school. Praise and worship practice. Elders' meetings.
- 12) **SLIDE** This restoration involves everyone - from the youngest to the oldest
- 13) This process is about bringing the living stones together, not about finding fault