Ephesians 2:21-22 (Jane J. Leake) 131673

Clay and Stone: Babylon the Great and the New Jerusalem, Chapter 6: The Temple of Stone (2:21-22)

“In Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." ({vi 29251-29252}Eph. 2:21, 22).

I REMEMBER going years ago to see a large cathedral. We had to pass over bridges which spanned a river laden with ships. We had to travel through narrow streets crowded with vehicles of every description. On the pavements busy men and women jostled each other, as they pressed along on their various intents. The constant roar of wheels and hoofs and tramping feet and screaming engines echoed and reechoed on every side. Suddenly I stepped into the precincts of the mighty edifice, and all was hush and stillness. I could scarcely hear the roll of the traffic, or feel its ceaseless throb. The change was as welcome as it was sudden, and I gazed, in the dim light, on quiet graves, and cold, sculptured forms, and Gothic arches, and heard the low, sweet tones of sacred music swelling plaintively around me.

So now the soul that has entered by faith into the value of Christ's death and resurrection can leave the confusion of Babylon, and enter in spirit the precincts of a building that groweth day by day unto a "holy temple in the Lord.”

Have you found this quiet spot where the roar of the great Babylon's disorder cannot reach you? Have you discovered, as you mourned over the outward ruin of the house of God, that should have been so fair, that there is a secret way out of all the confusion around? Have you been drawn on by the mighty power of the Spirit of God within you— on, till you viewed the completeness of the work wrought in the death of Christ; that you, of the "earth, earthy," have ended in that grave in God's sight, and now, clear through His death of all that you were, have risen with Him, in a new condition a—living stone? "To Whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" ({vi 30404-30405}1 Peter 2:4, 5).

I want you to see that, just as man is building his great temple tower on the earth today, formed of human beings of the "earth, earthy," so God is building a Temple on the earth formed of persons who have been created anew in Christ Jesus, and have thus become "living stones." Of Christ the Rock they are; to Christ in resurrection they are being drawn; and "as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly" ({vi 28723-28727}1 Cor. 15:4-8). You pass through that solemn portal alone, but the moment you emerge you find yourself in company knit together by a living Power, living stone clinging to living stone, as loadstone clings to loadstone. No mortar, no cement, no concrete, is needed in this wondrous building; it is held together by indwelling Power.

I am not doubting that in God's sight you are a costly stone in His holy Temple upon earth today; but I am asking, Do you know the place? Have you in your soul's experience tasted the calm, holy hush of that wondrous living building? It hath no concord with Babylon's wit, and Babylon's might, and Babylon's wealth. Nothing of the clay can enter there; all is living all is spiritual; it groweth day by day unto "a holy temple in the Lord." The priests are there, the holy vessels are there; the incense is there, the altar is there. The service is one of perpetual adoration. Do you know the place? It lies on the other side of death. The grave of Christ, where all human cult is lost, is its strange portal. "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men?... If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above" (Col. 2). Death, the death of Christ, lies between those who consciously enter there, and all human energy and organization. Death separates. How well do we all know this!

Only the other day, I saw a funeral procession pass slowly to the cemetery of a country town. It was bearing to the grave the body of a young lady whose stay on earth was over. I watched the hearse as it passed silently before me, smothered in masses of lovely flowers, decked with symbol of cross and crown. I could not help wondering at the sight. What was it all to her? They laid the coffin low, with the solemn words, "Dust to dust, and ashes to ashes." She was gone all that was left of her was gone. The flowers were laid upon the grave to wither there. Death had rolled in between her and those who loved her between her and this scene forever.

Death separates. We are baptized unto the death of Christ. Does His death lie between us and this present evil world? Are we strangers in Babylon, owning no allegiance to the prince of this world? or are we believing Satan's lie that Christ is ruling over the wretched scene of wild confusion which he has made? But if we know and believe from God's Word that there is a great spiritual Temple on the earth to-day, where God the Holy Spirit dwells, let us not rest till we each find our way consciously into its hallowed precincts, till we live here as those who are part of the spiritual house that is unseen by mortal eye.

Do you ask, "Has God given us an object-lesson as to this spiritual house?" Yes, He has. Let us look at it together. Come away, then, up the stream of time till David the king is before us. He is aged and feeble, and drawing near to the time of his departure. He has sent for his young son Solomon; he has called together his princes and his nobles and he tells them that Jehovah has given him by His Spirit "in writing" the ideal of an exceedingly "magnifical" temple to be built at Jerusalem. He tells them that he had wished to build it himself, but Jehovah had refused his request because he had been a great warrior, and had shed much blood. But he goes on to say that in the time of his trouble he had set masons to hew wrought stones for the work, and that he had prepared "with all his might gold, silver, brass, iron, cedar-wood, onyx stones, glistering stones, stones of divers colors, all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance" (1 Chron. 29). During his long reign of trial and trouble this great ideal had been ever before him, and while fighting with enemies without, and subduing sedition within, the chipping of the chisel, the grinding of the saw, the whirr of the polishing tools, had constantly been heard, so that now all was ready for the great and glorious work that his son Solomon was to accomplish.

Soon after this, full of years, the brave old king passes to his fathers and at Solomon's command they bring the "great stones, costly stones, hewed stones" that he had prepared to lay the foundation of Jehovah's temple on earth. But what a strange hush is over the busy scene! "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone, made ready before it was brought thither; so that there was neither hammer, nor ax, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building" (1 Kings 6:7). How could the work be done thus silently? Because of all that preparation in the days of David's rejection, in the time of his wars and sufferings— the quarrying, the squaring, the shaping, and the polishing had been carried on then. He had seen his great ideal before him— carved and wrought and piled in its splendor; he had seen it blazing with gold and sparkling with gems. He had seen its priests in garments of glory and beauty, its white-robed Levites at their solemn service, its porters at its gates. He had heard the anthems of his own inspired songs pealing through its sacred courts. All had been ordered before him "exceeding magnifical," when as yet there was none of it.

That is God's great object-lesson for us to-day. That was a temple built of material stones, and laid upon an earthly rock; but it is a picture of the great spiritual temple where God the Holy Ghost dwells on earth to-day. The Lord Jesus when on earth, speaking of His body, said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again" (John 2:19), so now His Church is looked at as His body on the earth, and also as the temple of God on the earth. "For ye are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor. 6:16).

What! amidst all the uproar and confusion around us, the babel of tongues as to creeds and forms and modes of worship, as to incense and garments and priests and musical instruments— is there— can there, be but one great Temple Church holy unto the Lord? I answer, the Light of God's Word shows but one. Noiselessly it rises amidst all the hubbub of Babylon— not a particle of clay about it; formed as of yore of hewn stones, of costly stones, of precious stones, but all of them living stones. True believers indwelt by the holy Spirit are these costly stones. But oh, how many know nothing of the great and holy building of which in God's sight they each form a part! How many are bewildered in the wild confusion of Satan's masterpiece, the imitation temple, the tower of Babylon the Great. How many have overlooked the Apostle's warning: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.... Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances.... after the commandments and doctrines of men?" (Col. 2:8 and 20).

Only yesterday, as I sat on a pleasant balcony with two young Christians, the bitter cry went up: "Look at the confusion around us. One person says this is right; another that! Which are you to believe?" I ventured a word as to the authority of the Word of God. "But," said they, "everyone claims to find his special creed in the Word of God." Then one of them supposed "all were a little right"; and the other shrugged her shoulders and grew silent. Could I tell them which was right? No. Can I tell you? No; the little company of long ago has for many a century been merged in the great world-system of the usurper. Those Christians who try to better it, only fail one after the other, only increase the dire confusion. The Church in man's hand has failed; she is ruined. When you own the ruin, and mourn the ruin, as the captives of Israel mourned their nation's failure in Babylon, then you are getting near to the only way of escape. For remember, amidst all, God sees His spiritual Temple rising built of costly stones, precious stones, glistering stones. It is only when weary of all human efforts at improvement, all human efforts at reconstruction, that the believer finds out that death separates, and that "the grave wherein never man before was laid" is the portal out of confusion and shame into order and reality. It is the Quarry whence "living stones" are drawn to the Living Stone Himself— i.e. Christ in resurrection. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1).

Do you cry, "Make it plain to us," I cannot. Only when you are content to leave the clay in its worst and its best forms as ended in the grave of Christ will you get the anointed eye that sees the holy Temple of God upon the earth to-day, and slide consciously by divine power into your proper place therein—the place which in God's sight has ever been yours, and for which His discipline has been fitting you. Christ in resurrection like a mighty load-stone draws every living stone unto Himself.

Oh, wonderful transition! Oh, marvelous new creation! The moral weakness that is typified by the clay, left behind in death, and the moral firmness and durability typified by the stone wrought into the new being by the Spirit of God. There is no mending of the broken clay vessel. God Himself says, "That cannot be made whole again"; but there are the "living stones," of Christ and from Christ, a new moral creation, each one to be fitted and shaped to fill its own place in the Temple to-day, and in the great imperial city, the New Jerusalem, which is God's ideal for the future.

Do you often wonder why those whom you know to be true Christians seem to be more stricken in body and tried in circumstances than other people? I used to wonder, and to say to myself that they seemed worse off here, instead of better off. I know why it is so now. Each living stone has to be chiselled and shaped and polished for its own particular place in the Temple of God. Some need much more chipping than others, not because the material is worse, for the material is all of Christ, but because they are wanted, in the purpose of God, for some special place in His Temple or His city.

Do you ask, "Where is the altar in this Temple?" Christ is the only altar; He is a living altar; on Him alone the worshipping priests lay their living sacrifices. Perpetual incense rises to God from that altar, in living prayer and heartfelt praise. Do you ask, "Where are the priests and the singers?" I answer that in ill-appointed garrets, on beds of pain and suffering, in hospitals, in workhouses, in mansions, in cottages, in palaces perchance, in the dens and slums of great cities, in the wastes of deserts, in ships upon the wild oceans, the priests and the singers of this holy Temple are found. A white-robed company are they, stainless in the clear light of God most high, sanctified and set apart for priestly service by the blood of God's Lamb, by the anointing oil of God's Spirit. Their service is one of perpetual adoration; and prayers and songs of praise are rising night and day from the precincts of that holy Temple, while one long roll of melody goes up into God's most holy ear, Christ the leader of the singing, Christ the sweet perfume, Christ the song, Christ the theme. "In His temple doth every whit speak of His glory" (Psa. 29:9).

It is lovely to contemplate it, is it not? to know that in the very midst of this great Babylon world, with all its forms of manmade religion, there is one great Temple all of Christ, in which God the Holy Ghost still dwells upon the earth, refusing all the wealth and pomp and mind and culture of man, and ever forming for His building living stones out of Christ the Rock.

How many young Christians are looking round, at the present time, for that which is the Church. It exists. It exists. Let the Great Builder have His way with you, and you will know it. Only I entreat you to remember that all true worship is as risen with Christ; sin and death are, so to

speak, behind those worshipping priests. "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).

Do not confuse things. I am not talking of your life in the world in bodies of clay. I am talking of God's holy Temple, God's one place of worship on the earth. All this is in the Spirit. The death of Christ is the portal; Christ in resurrection is the gathering center; and the Holy Spirit is the living Power.

Close to the house where I lived as a child ran a large river. In the midst of the rapid current stood a post. What it was for I do not know; some said it was to mark the depth of the waters, some that it was for the mooring of boats. I always saw it standing alone in the rushing stream; and when the great river was swollen by floods and the arches of the fine old bridge had nearly disappeared, and the lock gates stood wide open, powerless to resist the racing torrent, still that solitary pillar stood out in the swirling stream, unmoved, unmovable.

So now the flood-tide of evil has set in around us, the old gates that held it back of yore are useless; higher and higher rises the awful tide, but amidst it all the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: "The Lord knoweth them that are His." And, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19). Perilous times are upon us; the Lord wants "vessels to honor, meet for the Master's use.”

Do you know how the molten vessels for Solomon's temple were prepared? They were cast in clay molds, down by the river Jordan, hard by the spot where Israel crossed its waveless stream, when they first entered the land. Vessels to honor cast in clay molds! The clay molds had to be broken and cast away; the clay did not get into the temple. But the treasure was fitted and shaped in the earthen vessel, and the more the earthen mold was broken the more of the vessel to honor could be seen.

So now we have the treasure of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; but we hold these glorious truths "in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:7). Fear not for the breaking of the clay mold. If you are going to purge yourself from the vessels to dishonor, much breaking and sorrow and loss will be yours.

But hush! There is a cry, a loud prophetic cry. "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and He shall bring forth the headstone with shoutings. Grace, grace unto it" (Zech. 4:7). When the night is darkest, the dawn is nearest. Stand, young Christians, stand for Christ and for His truth. The Headstone of the Corner shall suddenly come down to crown and complete the holy Temple; and in a moment rising saints and changed saints—costly stones, precious stones, glistering stones, living stones,—founded on the Living Stone, crowned by the Head Stone, shall stand complete, a holy Temple unto the Lord. One instant on the earth, the next rising to meet Him as the glorious Bride, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing ({vi 29619-29622}1 Thess. 4:15-18).

From Great Babel's wild confusion,

From her tower of strange delusion,

From her thousand voices crying,

And her questions and replying,

From the winds of doctrine blowing

Through her lofty tower upgoing—

Turn ye, turn ye, weary seeker,

God Himself would be your keeper.

Lofty walls she hath around ye,

Brazen gates whose strength confounds ye,

Human wisdom, cult, and notion,

Ancient custom, will devotion,

Taste and skill and emulation,

Human means for exaltation—

Hast thou found no way of flying?

Pause, O seeker, cease thy trying,

To an unseen Lord confide ye;

Comes His "still small voice" to guide ye.

“Follow Me," to all it crieth.

If 'tis "Yea, Lord," thou repliest,

Strangely drawn by Power divine,

Lo, an "open door" is thine.

Low—so low the entrance lying—

Thou must whisper "this is dying":

Dying, to all human scheming,

Human method, power, or dreaming.

For by cross and grave He goeth,

This the only way He showeth.

Wilt thou follow trembling wondering?

Endeth here the Law's stern thundering,

Endeth here proud Babel's clamor,

Endeth here her fatal glamor.

Adam's sin hath found its dooming

In the Cross above thee looming;

Adam's race hath found its ending

In this grave thou art descending.

Endeth here thine own past history,

Riseth thence thy soul in victory,

Riseth with the One once risen,

Living Lord of Death's dread prison.

Riseth knowing Him Who calls thee,

Whose most tender love enthralls thee,

Draws thee, living stone, to place thee,

Where a thousand glories grace thee,

In His temple fair, uprising

Where thine opened eyes surprising,

Thou beholdest all who own

Christ Himself the Living Stone.

Oh that wondrous living fane,

Free from taint of mortal stain!

Hast thou found it? joined the singing,

Where each echoing stone is ringing

With one tense and deep laudation,

With perpetual adoration

Of the Father from Whose loving

Spring the joys that all are proving?

Hast thou found it where no beaming

Sun or moon or star is gleaming?

Where the day no ending bringeth?

Where the light no shadow flingeth?

Hast thou found it? Living— living—

“Every whit" with praises ringing!

Christ Himself the living Psalter,

Living Priest and living Altar,

Christ the incense, prayers and praising

For the Father's joyance raising;

Christ Who son on son is bringing

Day by day to join His singing?

Priests they are of royal degree;

Heavenly is their pedigree;

Thus by blood and oil anointed

Come they each to place appointed:

Some in garrets cold and dreary,

Singing praises bright and cheery;

Some o'er dark Siberia roaming,

Singing through its winter gloaming;

Some in prisons— tortured groaning—

Singing still o'er Nature's moaning;

Some from ocean's wildest heaving

Their glad song of praises weaving;

Some in palace, house, or cot,

Where or when it matter'th not—

Precious, costly, glistering stones,

Each and all that Builder owns.

Precious— Yes; 'twas Love that sought them;

Costly— Yes; 'twas blood that bought them;

Glistering—Yes; 'twas Power that wrought them;

Christ to God the Father brought them.

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