

12-9-1998

Advent Devotional "Cornerstone"

S. Ray Granade

Ouachita Baptist University, granade@obu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/creative_work

Recommended Citation

Granade, S. Ray, "Advent Devotional "Cornerstone"" (1998). *Creative Works*. 35.
https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/creative_work/35

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Publications at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Creative Works by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

Advent Devotional
December 9, 1998
CORNERSTONE
Isaiah 28:16-18

I grew up in south Alabama where wood was the building material of choice. The first home I remember had been built that way about the turn of the century amidst a block of others of the same vintage and construction. Across the alley from our house stood the old Evergreen Baptist Church, a two-story wooden structure constructed jointly by the local Masons, who still used the upstairs for their meetings, and the congregation which had worshipped downstairs before erecting a larger building across the street.

Cornerstones didn't exist for wooden buildings. To see one, I had to cross the street to the newer church house, or maybe cross the railroad tracks that bisected town and look at the bank or the courthouse. Those buildings were brick, and each had a ceremonial cornerstone commemorating the buildings origin. Brick buildings don't really need cornerstones, I discovered when the church decided to build a new pastorium. Houses consequently didn't boast such grand details in their construction.

I learned more about ceremonial cornerstones when a church was torn down and the cornerstone opened. It contained things of value and served as a time capsule of sorts. As I found out still more, I discovered that they usually contained the names of people instrumental in the building's construction, a few coins, and a newspaper. The most important thing I learned about cornerstones was that they make very poor time capsules. Their opening always revealed that time and

the acidic environment had defaced or destroyed what people had hoped to preserve by inclusion.

Isaiah's words reveal that God obviously wasn't talking about a ceremonial cornerstone; He had something else in mind. The verse previous to these three provides the necessary backdrop. The Jews had sought refuge in lies and deception. They had, as Goethe portrays Faust doing, sold their souls to Satan for material gain. Theirs was, to use William Lloyd Garrison's memorable phrase, "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell." Like those people who used cornerstones as time capsules, the Jews were about to discover that their refuge offered only destruction.

God's response to this corrupt bargain was to build rather than destroy. He offers refuge in a fortress rather than in trickery and deceit. As Jesus defines the metaphor in Matthew 7:24-27 and Luke 6:46-49, God had to build on a firm foundation rather than on sand. To build strong and solid, He needed structural integrity.

God builds His Zion, or New Jerusalem, as builders using stone build. He first lays a cornerstone. It is, Isaiah records, tested to withstand all pressures. Able to support the entire structure against all forces, it can't be cheap. Its placement is a matter of great concern. Only when the cornerstone is placed correctly will the edifice be plumb, level, and square. The cornerstone defines the structure which rests upon it. That structure will be laid out according to justice and leveled by righteousness.

The Messiah will be indispensable and fundamental, not ceremonial. He will be the cornerstone of the place of refuge for those caught in life's maelstrom. His "mighty fortress" cancels the "covenant with death and agreement with hell." God's refuge, erected on the

Cornerstone, offers protection and life rather than decay and destruction.

Ray Granada