

Building of the Firm Foundation | Jesus Christ the Cornerstone | Who is our Firm Foundation?

THE SOWER

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Jan/Feb 2010 | STFonline.org

JESUS CHRIST THE FIRM FOUNDATION



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Feature Articles

4	Opening Letter
5	Building on the Firm Foundation – Dan Gallagher
8	Christian Appalachian Project – Missionary Trip Summary – Joshua Albus
9	The Contender – Who is Our Firm Foundation? – Names & Descriptions of the Messiah – John W. Schoenheit
14	Partner Profile – Doug & Sue Reinis
15	Fuel for the Fire – The Revised English Version – An Inside Look at the REV – Joshua Anderson
17	Figures of Speech – Hendiadys (Two for One) – John W. Schoenheit
20	Jesus Christ the Cornerstone – John W. Schoenheit
24	What Are You Building On?
25	The Vine – The Pillar & Bulwark of Truth – Michael L. Patten
27	The ABC's of God – The Miracles – Cara Hanson
30	Dear Sower

Opening Letter

Building on the Firm Foundation

Spirit & Truth Fellowship International's theme for the year 2010 is "Building on the Firm Foundation," so this year each issue of *The Sower* will focus on something foundational to Christian life, fellowship, and faith. In this issue we focus on Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. After all, what could be more foundational to Christianity than Christ?

It is a "happy coincidence" that our first issue of the year comes in January/February, because in some ways it is easier to speak of foundations in the winter than in other seasons. In the winter there is a lot of concern about having a firm foundation. The Board of Directors and staff of Spirit & Truth Fellowship all live in the northern United States, and each of us has fallen on ice and/or slid his or her car off an icy road at least once.

We slide or fall when our foundation is not firm. Often almost as bad as the fall itself, however, is the concern, and even worry, we each feel when we venture onto surfaces we do not trust to be secure. So having a firm foundation not only keeps us secure in life, it helps us to feel secure. Thankfully, with Christ as our foundation, we are secure, and furthermore, as we learn more and more about him, we will also feel more secure. All doubt, worry, or feeling of insecurity about our present and future vanish like smoke as we get to know our foundation, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the secure foundation of each individual Christian, and also the firm foundation of the Church itself. We get Jesus Christ as our foundation when we confess Christ as our Lord and believe that God raised him from the dead. Once we have accepted Christ as Lord, we are guaranteed everlasting life, and there is no foundation more secure than that. Making Christ Lord is an act of trust, and the more we know Christ, the easier it is to trust.

Once we trust Christ, it is important to help others trust him. Everlasting life is not a prize to be hoarded, but a precious gift to be shared with others. One of the best places for that sharing to happen is in our home fellowships and churches. Scripture teaches that Christ is the cornerstone of God's Temple and each Christian is a living stone in the Temple. We need a firm foundation, and we need each other to accomplish God's purposes in our lives. We pray that this issue of *The Sower* gives you insight into our firm foundation, Jesus Christ, so that it is easier for you to trust him and share him with others.

Thankful to be fellow stones in the Temple built on Christ,
Spirit & Truth Fellowship Board of Directors

Dan Gallagher, John Schoenheit, Gary Theisen and Karen Theisen

Building on the Firm Foundation

by Dan Gallagher

Early in my professional life I saw firsthand how critical the foundation of a building is to its structural success. In the early 1980's I worked in the downtown financial district of San Francisco, a city built upon very unstable soil and prone to severe earthquakes. The "Great Quake of 1906" taught the San Franciscans just how devastating it can be when buildings are not properly built on solid foundations. I was reminded of this fact every day that I walked to work and saw the workmen working month after month in a huge hole on the foundational system of a future high-rise skyscraper. It would get annoying walking on temporary sidewalks and past plywood barricades as they labored on, preparing the site with steel rebar, concrete, and foundation forms. Then one day, as if out of nowhere, the building's skeletal structure would begin to appear, revealing the soon-to-come enormous building that was going to occupy this part of the skyline. No matter how impressive the building would one day be, its structural integrity was all dependent upon the firmness of the foundation.

The necessity of having a firm foundation is a lesson we all need to learn, especially when it comes to our spiritual lives. A building's structural integrity is dependent upon the types of materials that are used and the type of foundation it is built upon. In the same way, we need to be very careful what we are building our spiritual work on, and to take heed how we are building. Jesus instructed his followers to make sure that they not only heard his words, but also put them into practice. If they did then they would be like a wise man that had laid his foundation on a rock.

Matthew 7:24 and 25

(24) Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine **and** puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

(25) The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its **foundation on the rock.**

For a long time I gave myself a pass on ungodly behavior, largely because I felt righteous in my knowing (hearing) Jesus' words. Hearing and knowing is where we need to start, but it must be followed by practice. We are not building on the firm foundation of Christ unless we are "doing" what he said to do. Truth in doctrine is a prerequisite for truth in practice, but the point of hearing is doing.

James 1:22

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Not only are we building as unskilled tradespersons when we do not build with truth, we are also building on a wrong foundation. Every building contractor knows that if the foundation is wrong then the house cannot succeed. A number of years ago I hired a contractor to add a porch on the back of my house. Unfortunately, during the process of installing the foundation, one of the tradesmen made a mistake resulting in the foundation being over three inches out of square. The error at this most fundamental stage of construction transfers into headaches and difficulties at each subsequent stage of building. It had to be fixed or I would end up with a porch that was crooked, which is something no one wants. If we do not take care to build on the foundation of Christ, the only firm foundation there is, our work will be in vain because our building will not last. It will not endure because it is being built on a very unstable and shaky foundation. Jesus said it is like building on sand, the worst of all types of load-bearing soils, and the result is that what we built will one day come crashing down.

Matthew 7:26 and 27

(26) But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

(27) The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

God has given us the Rock upon which each of us can build. The structural integrity and suitability of Jesus as solid foundational material has passed the most rigorous examination possible. God confirmed the acceptability of Jesus as the proper foundation when he raised him from the dead, and he is the only foundation that meets the Master Building Inspector's stamp of approval.

1 Corinthians 3:11

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

I am building on sand whenever I rebel against God by sinning. Every time I “want it my way” instead of His way, or whenever I attempt to stand in my own sense of self-righteousness on my works, I again build on unsound ground. Any foundation other than the foundation of Christ is nothing but quicksand that will swallow us up and make all of our work worthless. When we pursue holiness, we are not like the wicked or ungodly whose houses will one day fall; rather, we are standing upon The Rock.

Proverbs 12:7

Wicked men are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous stands firm.

Most builders I know hate having to redo their work. It is very frustrating to build something and then see it fall apart or rot. I love knowing that when I pursue Christ and practice his words, I am constructing something that will endure. It will not rot, fade, rust, or ever corrupt away.¹ Not only will it never perish, but it also cannot be destroyed when Christ tests it, because it is fireproof.

1 Corinthians 3:12-14

(12) If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw,

(13) his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work.

(14) If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.”

When I read the construction specifications of the Tent of Meeting (Tabernacle) that God gave to Moses, the blueprint so to speak, I am amazed at the details and precision that He laid out. He enumerated to Moses every detail He desired: its size, materials, colors, and manner of putting all the pieces together.² Every tradesman knows that the success of a construction project is found in the preplanning of the details and specifications. No contractor can be expected to deliver to the owner what he or she desires if they do not communicate their “wants” up front. God knew what He wanted and He communicated it to Moses; then it was Moses' responsibility to make sure it happened. In a similar manner, God has communicated to us through Jesus His desire for the type of building we are to construct.

1 Peter 2:4 and 5

(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.

He has clearly communicated to us the building plans and given us the tools and materials with which to build. God and Jesus have done their part, now it is up to us to do ours. When we put Christ's words into

practice we are building upon the firm “foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20).

When the Israelites had finished building the Tent of Meeting, Moses inspected their work and blessed it because they had done the work just as Yahweh had commanded (Exod. 39:42). In the same way, we have the responsibility to build just as our Lord has commanded us. We begin by establishing Christ as our foundation when we make him our Lord.³ We then build upon a solid foundation when we transform ourselves by putting on his character, which is the pursuit of holiness. We erect a lasting edifice whenever we discipline ourselves to live like Christ, according to God’s ways, not the ways of the world. We all sin, and when we do we should be quick to repent and confess our sin. And when others sin against us, we cannot be grudge-holders, but rather we must extend forgiveness, getting rid of all malice and bitterness. We must first know the way of our Father, learning His words, and then have the character and courage to do them. Then we can be the heart of God to a spiritually malnourished world.

Every loving act we do adds another enduring piece to our masterfully erected building. Some buildings are made out of weak materials and will not last. Let’s make sure that through our godly words and deeds we employ the highest quality materials. When we do, we have the promise that what we build will last, because we are *Building Upon the Firm Foundation*.

Notes:

1. Matthew 6:19-20: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”; 1 Peter 1:3-4: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you...”
2. Scholars have noted that the Bible must not contain all of the information necessary for building the Tent of Meeting, but it is clear from Exodus that God gave the details to Moses.
3. Romans 10:9 and 10: “That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”

**Read online at
TruthOrTradition.com/firm**

Christian Appalachian Project

Mission Trip Summary

by Joshua Albus

This past summer, I (Joshua Albus) went on a mission trip with six others to Kentucky to volunteer for the Christian Appalachian Project (CAP). It was a very enjoyable and rewarding experience!

CAP is an interdenominational Christian organization that serves the people living in the 400 counties which constitute the Appalachia region. One-fourth of those counties are considered distressed. CAP provides for those in need of physical, spiritual, and emotional support via several different avenues. One of those avenues is home repair and renovation for those who cannot afford the repairs. That is what we did for one week.

We helped an elderly widow. Her roof leaked in multiple areas and her windows were allowing too much heat to leave her house. The siding was falling apart, and the house had a lot of water and dry rot damage.

Our service to her was fixing and replacing those items. While we were blessing her, we ourselves were being blessed; of course, I am taking a measure of liberty to speak for everyone else based upon words of praise and thanks spoken every night. It is rewarding to give to others for more reasons than I can go into here. Acts 20:35b says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Proverbs 11:25 (ESV) says, "Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered." That is why it was a blessing to serve her. Although I cut open my hand on a piece of metal (I should have been wearing gloves) and was soaked in sweat and covered in a layer of grit at the end of every day, it was all worth it to see the joy on her face.

The work environment was also completely different from any work environment in which I have ever been before. My past work experience has been in both construction and office settings, but none of them has ever been as encouraging and uplifting as volunteering in this type of environment. No swearing or crude jokes occurred here, and everyone was patient and helpful. They did not insult or look down upon anyone for lack of knowledge. It was amazing! I am thrilled that I went on the mission trip. It was awesome and such a blessing to me!

As I end this article, I want to encourage you to join us June 6th – 11th, 2010 for our next CAP mission trip. You will bless others, and you will be blessed by it. You never know what God can show you. Construction experience is not a requirement or necessary to participate. I also encourage you to invite anyone, regardless of their beliefs, because the goal is serving others. As will often happen in our busy lives, the time that the mission trip is scheduled may not allow for you to participate, but that does not mean that you cannot participate in the service to others. It is always available for all of us to serve others by giving financially when we are not able to give of our time. If you are not able to come, it would be a blessing if you could donate to our CAP Mission Trip Scholarship Fund so others who want to go but are financially unable can participate. God bless you!

**Watch our highlights video at
STFonline.org/missiontrip**

The Contender

Who is Our Firm Foundation?

Names and Descriptions of the Messiah

by John W. Schoenheit

Just over 2000 years ago the great Apostle Paul wrote by revelation that Jesus Christ was the foundation for every Christian life, and no one could lay any other foundation than him (1 Cor. 3:11). He also said that each of us “should be careful how he builds” (1 Cor. 3:10). Every builder knows how important the foundation of any project is. When it comes to our Christian life, however, our “foundation” is even more important than the foundation of a building because Jesus is not only our foundation, but our example. The more we know about Jesus, the clearer we will be about what and how to build our lives as Christians. One of the most important ways that God has chosen to reveal His Son is by the names and descriptions that are given of him in the Bible.

Defining the Terms

The name of our Savior, “Jesus,” and the titles and appellations that the Word of God uses to describe him, are very helpful in understanding both the man himself and his mission, and also how to live as Christians. Before we begin to delve into some of the names and titles of Jesus, however, it greatly helps if we define the terms we will be using. Although the word “name” is used in different ways, properly and most usually, a “name” is a word or words which are given to a person close to the time he or she is born and by which he or she will be known in society. We refer to this as a “proper name,” in contrast to an “appellation,” “title,” or “description,” which we will define below. This article will focus on some of the names and appellations of Jesus, and thus will deal with names that are Semitic in nature. Although a full article on the names in the Bible would have to cover the customs involving Greek and Roman names, we do not do that in this article.

Proper Names

Proper names are constructed differently in different cultures. Typically in American culture, a baby is given a “first name” and often a “middle name,” and retains the “family name” or “last name” as the last part of his or her “full name.” Thus, my first name is John and my middle name is William, both of which were names of my ancestors. My “last name” is Schoenheit, which is an Americanized spelling of the German name that has come down to me from my distant ancestors. In our Western culture, the “last name” typically continues generation after generation and families are recognized by the “last name” (sometimes referred to as the “given name”). Hebrew culture treated names differently. There was no “last name” that was passed on from one generation to the next. Usually a Hebrew man or woman had one “name.” Of course, many people had the same name. Thus, for example, there are nine people called “Amariah” in the Bible, twelve called “Hananiah,” and eight called “Jehoram.”

To alleviate any confusion as to who was being referred to by any specific name, it was common in Semitic culture for people to clarify who they were by using the name of their father as a “last name.” Most students of the Bible are familiar with King David, whose father was Jesse. David is called “David son of Jesse” in the Bible (2 Sam. 23:1), but calling him that sounds more like a description than a name. However, there is no “the” in the Hebrew text, and Young’s Literal Translation is correct in translating the phrase, “David son of Jesse.” The Hebrew is simply “David ben Jesse,” which was David’s “full name.” Solomon’s full name was “Solomon son of David” (Solomon ben David; 1 Chron. 29:22). Similarly, the full name of Solomon’s son Rehoboam was “Rehoboam son of Solomon” (Rehoboam ben Solomon). It was the same for women as for men. For example, although most English versions refer to Dinah as “the daughter of Jacob,” the Hebrew text simply refers to her as “Dinah daughter of Jacob” (Dinah bat Jacob; Gen. 34:3).¹

An interesting biblical study is to note when people are called by their “full names.” Around the house, I usually called my son “Sam” unless he was in trouble, then I would call him, “Samuel Schoenheit.” We all know that when someone calls us by our full name, something serious is happening. That is usually the case in the Bible, too. After Peter had denied Jesus, Jesus needed to have a serious talk with him, so he said, “Simon son of John...” (John 21:15).² Peter knew in an instant by the way Jesus addressed him that this was going to be a serious talk. First, Jesus called him by his birth name, Simon. When Jesus had first met Peter, he changed his name from Simon to “Cephas,” which is the Aramaic form of the Greek name, “Peter” (John 1:42). However, in this serious moment, Jesus refers to Peter as “Simon ben John,” his full birth name.³ Jesus is only called by his “full name” one time in the Bible, and that was by the Jews who were confused by what he was saying (John 6:42; compare to John 1:45, which is close).

Since in the Hebrew culture no “last name” or “family name” continued generation after generation, if a person was not familiar with the family, by the third generation any direct connection to ancestors by name was lost. Therefore it was common for people to be very aware of the names that had been used by their ancestors, and use those names over and over. Thus, when Zachariah and Elizabeth were going to name their baby “John” (the Baptist), there was much concern among family members, who pointed out, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name” (Luke 1:61).

Since the identity of the family line was not passed down in the name, it was also quite common among Hebrews that people were “named” by other things, such as where they came from. Some good examples are Mary Magdalene, who was from the town of Magdala in Naphtali, Abishag the Shunammite (1 Kings 1:3), who was from Shunem in Issachar, or Uriah the Hittite, whose ancestors were Hittites.

The Bible contains about 1400 individual names, and demonstrates the wide variety of subjects chosen by parents as names. Names that came from nature include Deborah (bee), Rachel (ewe), and Jonah (dove). Names that refer to physical characteristics include Edom (red) and Hakkatan (small one). Many names reflected a hope or wish, or some circumstance in the parent’s life at the time. The sons of Jacob fit that category very well. “Reuben” the firstborn son of Leah, the less loved wife, means, “Look, a son.” Her second son, “Simeon” means “hearing,” for she said that Yahweh heard she was “hated” (loved less) and so He gave her a second son.⁴ Another common practice in Hebrew culture was the “sentence name,” in which the name itself was compound and made into a sentence. “Abraham” means “Father of a multitude,” “Elimelech” means “God is king,” and Hosea named one of his children, “Loammi,” which means “Not my people” to show God’s rejection of Israel due to their sin.

Appellation, Title, and Description

In contrast to a “proper name,” an “appellation” is a designation or identifying “name,” by which someone is known, due to some circumstance or characteristic. Calling Jesus Christ “Immanuel” is a good example. It was not Jesus’ “proper name,” but is an appellation, a designation by which he is known (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). In our common English vernacular, when we use the word “name” we include appellations, even though an appellation is not a “proper name.” A “title” is a type of appellation, marking some honor, dignity, or distinction due to something such as rank (Admiral), office (Mr. President), or attainment (Dr.). Titles are often used in conjunction with the name, but do not have to be (Archbishop Smith; Sir Hillary; Queen Elizabeth). “Lord,” which we use today of Jesus Christ, was a common title in both the Hebrew culture (“*adon*”) and the Greco-Roman culture (“*kurios*”).

In contrast to a “name” or “appellation,” a “description” is verbal representation of the person focusing on an attribute or attributes. For example, when the Messiah is referred to as “a man of sorrows” (Isa. 53:3), or “that great Shepherd of the sheep” (Heb. 13:20), he is being described, not technically “named.” However, sometimes the difference between a name and short description gets so blurred that it is hard to tell the difference between them. For example, when John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said to his disciples, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). It is common to hear Christians today say that

“Lamb of God” is a “name” of Jesus Christ, but the way it is used in Scripture, even though it is short and pithy, is actually a description. No one that we know of who was contemporary with Jesus spoke to him and addressed him as “Lamb of God.” However, through the years it is clear that what was a description in the Bible has become a common “name” (appellation) for him. Today, Jesus is clearly addressed as “Lamb of God” in Christian poetry, songs, and even prayers.

At this point we can understand why the list of the “names” of the Messiah often differs from organization to organization. First, as we have seen, it can be difficult to distinguish between a name, appellation, and description. Second, over the years descriptions sometimes become used as names, and people are reticent to exclude a “name” that is well known to them. Third, descriptions of the Messiah are generally so important in revealing his life and ministry, and the actual list of genuine “names” is so short, that most people feel that it is important to include some name-like descriptions of the Messiah. After all, a major reason for listing the names of the Messiah in the first place is so that we all will have a clearer picture of his life and ministry so we can build our lives upon the firm foundation of Christ. A few of the names and appellations of our Savior, Jesus Christ, are below.

Jesus

We know it was very important to God that His Son be called “Jesus,” because He sent an angel to both Joseph and Mary, and told each of them separately to name their child “Jesus” (Matt. 1:21, Luke 1:31). Technically, “Jesus” is the only proper name of our Savior, and his “full name” would be “Jesus son of Joseph.” The Greek text has the definite article and calls him, “Jesus the son of Joseph.” This sounds like a description, but it is a rendering of what would have been simply “Jesus son of Joseph” in the Hebrew or Aramaic that would have been spoken by his parents and most of his fellow countrymen (John 6:42). The Peshitta Aramaic text has “Jesus bar Joseph” (the Etheridge Translation of the Aramaic done in 1849 reads; “Jeshu bar Jauseph”).

The name “Jesus” has quite a history. The full Hebrew name is Jehoshua, more properly pronounced “Yehoshua.” There is no “J” in Hebrew, but the Hebrew letter *yod* gets consistently represented as a “J” in English despite the fact it has a “Y” sound. Jehoshua is the name of the man commonly known as “Joshua.” Both Jesus and Joshua were divinely given their names. Joshua was originally named “Hoshea,” (salvation, savior), but Moses changed his name and added the “J” prefix on the front representing “Yah,” God (Num. 13:16). Thus, Jehoshua became a sentence-name composed of the name of God and “savior” or “salvation.”

The problem with a “sentence name” is that the words in the sentence can be arranged in many different ways. Normally this is not a problem because the people who know the person get the sense of the name from the person and the family. Some of the ways that Jehoshua can be understood are: “Yah is salvation,” “Yah our Savior,” “Yah is his Salvation” or “The Salvation of Yah.”⁵

Jehoshua also occurred in a shortened form, Jeshua (pronounced Ye-shu’-a), and this is the name that most modern Hebrew speakers associate with Jesus. When the angel appeared to Joseph and Mary to tell them what God wanted them to name their child, we do not know whether he said “Jehoshua” or “Jeshua,” because both of those names became *Iesous* in the Greek text that we have today. When the Hebrew text was translated into Greek starting with the Septuagint, about 250 B.C., Jehoshua became *Iesous* (pronounced “ē-ā’-sus”). Eventually the Greek *Iesous* became the English “Jesus,” but that history is too long to cover, and involves the evolution of the English alphabet and its pronunciation. Suffice it to say that today, “Jesus” is the accepted transliteration of the Greek, while “Joshua” would be his accepted Hebrew name.⁶

It is hard to say too much about the name “Jesus,” the only “proper name” of God’s only begotten Son. The angel said God named him Jesus “because he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). From that angelically given context, understanding the sentence-name of Jesus as “Yah is salvation,” or “The Salvation of Yah” both make good sense. The great gloom that hangs over every person’s life is the fact that it will come to an end. Due to Adam’s sin, every person will die. There is no amount of love, fortune, or fame in this life that is

really meaningful without everlasting life. Without salvation and everlasting life, the greatest achievements of any man are simply like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic: they simply do not matter. On the other hand, if there is salvation from sin and death through the work of “Jesus,” the salvation of Yahweh, life matters. Can that be said clearly enough? Life matters IF salvation and everlasting life are real—and they are.

A closing remark that should be made about the name “Jesus” is that the power and authority of the name clearly transcends languages. The disciples healed people and expelled demons from people using the name of Jesus. Those early disciples would have been speaking Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin, certainly, but perhaps other ancient languages as well. English, Spanish, and many other modern languages would not evolve for hundreds of years. Nevertheless, as the languages evolved, something did not: the power in the name of Jesus. That name, no matter how translated, transliterated, or pronounced, is the name of the real man who sits at God’s right hand and has authority over His creation. Jesus knows when we are speaking about him, and he backs up our use of his name with his authority.

Son of God

The appellation “Son of God” was much more powerful in the biblical culture than it is in our modern culture. In the “patron and client”⁷ culture of the Bible, the son of a powerful person had power and authority simply by virtue of who he was. Although there is some of that in our culture today, modern American culture does not assign status because of birth family, but instead each person must earn his or her position in life. Ancient culture was more stratified and class oriented. The authority that Jesus had simply because he was God’s Son was clearly demonstrated shortly before his crucifixion. He did not have to die. As the son of the King, God, he had more than 12 legions of angels (72,000) at his command, and they could have easily defeated the entire army of Rome (Matt. 26:53). However, as any good and godly child, Jesus did not abuse his position but obeyed his Father and did what it took to save mankind, even though it meant terrible suffering and even his death. Using the word “although,” the book of Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus did not take unearned advantage of his family position. “**Although** he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered” (Heb. 5:8). Having been obedient even unto death, His Father recognized his maturity, raised him to His own right hand and gave him “All authority in heaven and on earth...” (Matt. 28:18).

Jesus Christ lived his life in such a way that God saw fit to make him the very foundation of the Church, and as “sons of God” via the New Birth, we Christians should learn from him. It is one thing to be happy to have the privileges of being born into the family of God, such as righteousness imputed by faith and authority to use the name of Jesus. However, it is another thing to have those family privileges anchored in a life of obedience and sacrifice. Jesus showed us how to walk as children of God. We need to honestly evaluate our lives, and if we are not serving as we should, make the necessary changes to “live a life worthy” of our family name (Eph. 4:1). If we serve and sacrifice here and now, we will reign with Jesus in the future (2 Tim. 2:12).

Wall peg (Nail; Tent Peg)

The book of Zechariah contains a verse that has three appellations of Jesus Christ.

Zechariah 10:4 (NET Bible)⁸

From him [the tribe of Judah] will come the cornerstone, the wall peg, the battle bow, and every ruler.

While it is quite easy to understand the appellations “cornerstone” and “battle bow,” and how they apply to Jesus Christ, the appellation “wall peg” is more difficult. First, many modern versions read “tent peg,” as if this verse is referring to one of the many tent stakes that supports a tent. That is not its meaning here. The meaning here is “the wall peg.” The single word “peg” is used in Isaiah 22:23 and 25. Tenney notes, “Such pegs were driven into the walls of houses and used as hangers for various articles.”⁹ Keil and Delitzsch write, “This figure [of the nail] is to be explained from the arrangement of eastern houses, in which the inner walls are provided with a row of large nails or plugs for hanging the house utensils upon.”¹⁰ Like houses, tents had supports for

hanging things too, so everything would not sit in the dirt on the floor. Inside a tent, the “nail” would refer to, “The large peg inside an Oriental tent on which is hung most of its valuable furniture. On Messiah hang all the glory and hope of His people.”¹¹

When Jesus is referred to as the Cornerstone, the Battle Bow, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Righteous Judge, and other such appellations and descriptions, we get the feeling of power and authority. However, there is another aspect of Jesus Christ. Just as our wall hooks and hangers allow us to keep our lives properly organized, without Jesus Christ no life is truly organized. Many people living on earth today seem to be well organized and doing fine without Jesus Christ. Good Christians, however, are not deceived by outward appearances. Without him, everything we own, including our hopes and dreams, sit on the floor in the dirt, awaiting certain destruction. Jesus Christ is the only sure foundation any person can have in his or her life, and it is important that we learn about him and diligently build our lives upon him.¹²

Notes:

1. In Hebrew, “ben” is “son of” while “bat” is “daughter of.”

2. Peter’s father is known by two names in the Bible. “Jonah” (Matt. 16:17), and “John” (John 1:42; 21:15-17). The Bible does not explain why Peter’s father has two names. It is possible that his birth name was John, as the Gospel of John twice indicates, but because he was in the fishing business he picked up the name “Jonah.” He was more commonly known by that name. Some later copyists tried to harmonize the gospels of Matthew and John by changing the name “John” to “Jonah,” in the Gospel of John, which is why “Jonas” always appears in the King James Version. However, modern textual research shows that Peter’s father is called by two different names. Although that bothers some people, it is not a problem. Many people are called by different names in different situations.

3. Although it is not explicitly stated that the family patriarch led the family in the worship of God, the heads of families, such as Abraham, are consistently said to build altars and worship, while there is no record of a woman or child doing so. The implication is not that the man worshipped on his own while his wife (or wives) and children did not worship, but rather that the head of the family led the worship of the family.

4. The “name” of God in the Old Testament is “Yahweh,” sometimes referred to as “Jehovah,” although that spelling does not exist in the Hebrew (technically, neither does the spelling “Yahweh.” Hebrew does not have the vowels, so the name is YHWH in the written text. We supply the vowels as we believe the name would have been pronounced). It is used more than 6000 times in the Old Testament. “Names” such as “Elohim,” and “El Shaddai,” are titles, not God’s proper name.

5. Various ways the “sentence name” of Jehoshua can be constructed can be found in *All the Divine Names and Titles in the Bible* by Herbert Lockyer; *Dictionary of Old Testament Proper Names*, by Alfred Jones; and some Bible Encyclopedia articles on Jehoshua, Joshua, and Jesus.

6. The fact that the names Joshua and Jesus are the same has led to some confusion. In the King James Version of the Bible, for example, “Jesus” is said to have brought the Tabernacle into the Promised Land (Acts 7:45; it should be “Joshua”), and he is also confused with Joshua in Hebrews 4:8.

7. For further study on the patron-client relationship see TruthOrTradition.com/patron

8. Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated (NET) are from the NET Bible® copyright © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. Bible.org. All rights reserved.

9. Merrill Tenney, editor; *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Regency Reference Library, Grand Rapids, MI, 1975), vol. 4, p. 358, “nail.”

10. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament; Volume 10, The Minor Prophets* (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, reprinted 2006), p. 584.

11. R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, D. Brown; *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA, reprinted 2008), p. 692.

12. There are many other appellations and descriptions of Jesus Christ in addition to the ones handled in this article. You can find some in our book, *One God & One Lord*, in the appendix “Names and Titles of Jesus Christ.”

**Available online at
TruthOrTradition.com/foundation**

Partner Profile

Doug & Sue Reinis

Our family has been part of Spirit & Truth Fellowship for the past three years. What clearly set apart this ministry for us was the heart of the leadership and Spirit & Truth Fellowship's commitment to fully share the knowledge of God's matchless Word.

Our previous denomination was very divisive. You were either part of "the church" or you weren't. Structured Bible study classes were only available if you met a stringent set of criteria. This could include previous classes attended, level of personal debt and current standing within the church. In contrast, at Spirit & Truth Fellowship the only course prerequisite was the love of the Word and the desire to learn more. The desire to freely avail the Word to all men immediately distinguished this ministry in our eyes.

They didn't shy away from the difficult topics. We found this ministry when we did an Internet search on tithing. For years we were taught and bound by traditional church teaching on this topic. Now, we freely give with a joyous heart and God blesses us abundantly. We are so excited and thankful for the resources available to us through the websites, bookstore and classes, that help us learn God's Word and challenge us to improve our daily walk with our living Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The teaching on the one household of God has enabled us to see how God desires that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). All too often, church divisions are caused by doctrines of men and are *not* God's will. The Apostle Paul, addressing the divisions in the Church in Corinth, stated:

1 Corinthians 3:3-6 and 9 (KJV)

(3) For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?

(4) For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are you not carnal?

(5) Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

(6) I have planted, Apollos watered but God gave the increase.

(9) For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

This understanding of the one household of God has, in turn, allowed us to build ties to our earthly family and fellow Christians. When we focus on the love of God and the accomplished works of Jesus Christ we build common spiritual ground and truly edify one another.

There is learning available for all who want to understand the truth of God's Word, for those people just learning the Word to the mature believers who have been in fellowship for many years.

Our teenage daughter attended the Teens & Twenties Camp this past summer. During this week, she learned to speak in tongues and interpret *and* to prophesy. Within a week she brought forth holy spirit manifestations that took her parents years to learn and have the confidence to share. What an incredible blessing! The heart of full sharing of Spirit & Truth Fellowship has made this possible. We exhort each of you to give and be blessed.

Doug & Sue Reinis
Kernersville, NC

Fuel for the Fire

The Revised English Version®

An Inside Look at the REV®

by Joshua Anderson

Did you know Spirit & Truth Fellowship International is working on a translation and commentary of the New Testament?

They're called the Revised English Version (REV)¹, and the REV Commentary of the New Testament. I've had the privilege to work closely on this project with John Schoenheit, and I'd like to share a little with you about our heart behind why we're doing this translation, and what's so cool about it.

First, here's a little personal background of how I got involved in translation work. When I entered the University I was an undeclared major ("undeclared" because it's hard to declare a major when you have no idea what you want to be). But I noticed I could take ancient Greek for my language requirements. That sounded great! I drooled at the thought of reading the New Testament in the original language instead of through the eyes of translators. Fast forward a couple of years and I still have no major. But I have had a lot of Greek. So I noticed, "Hey, if I just keep taking Greek a couple more years, I can be a Greek major!" So I kind of fell into it, but here I am now with four years of Greek; and I'm currently working on a masters program in Theology.

I tell you this because when you're reading the Greek New Testament every day, you begin to see the beauty of the Scriptures on a deeper level. And you can begin to see that many English versions don't always do a good job of bringing that over. In fact, sometimes they just plain mess it up.

For instance, look at the record of the man born blind in John 9. The NRSV reads:

John 9:3b (NRSV)²

...he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him.

What? You mean God blinded this child, making him walk in darkness for the better part of his life, just so Jesus could be the one to show up someday and heal him? That doesn't make any sense. That doesn't sound anything like the God of love we know and worship, the God revealed by Jesus Christ. Thankfully, that's not at all how the verse should be translated. The translators added the words "he was born blind," which are not in the Greek. They did this because their theology says God is responsible for suffering and evil in the world, so God must have been responsible for this man's blindness. Instead of adding these words the verse should read, "Let the works of God be manifested in his life!" But if you were only reading most English versions, you'd never know this; you'd be stuck, confused as to why God blinded this person just to later "reveal his works" by healing the blindness.

This leads me to why the REV and Commentary are so cool. None of the popular English versions of the Bible tell you *why* they translate a verse the way they do. You're stuck just taking their word for it. But with the REV, we're backing up the translation of each verse in the Commentary, so you can know exactly why we translated it the way we did. In the case of John 9:3, if you're curious, why not look up the entry in the Commentary and see how we give good reasons for our translation? You can access the REV and Commentary for free online at STFonline.org/rev

The fact is, every translation is guided in part by the theology of the translators, even ours. This is because many verses can be translated several ways, so one has to tell from the context which translation is correct, or if the context is inconclusive, from the wider scope of Scripture. If the translator thinks that God is the cause of suffering due to his view of the “wider scope” of Scripture—that is, from his theological picture of the Bible—then he will plug that understanding into John 9:3. But if he understands that God is love, and that evil is partly the result of the spiritual battle, and that Satan is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4) who holds the power of death (Heb. 2:14), then he will translate accordingly.³

The question is this: For biblical study purposes, wouldn't it be refreshing to read a translation that reflects your theology? Especially, if you had detailed notes on why such a translation is thought to be best? That is exactly what we are trying to accomplish with the REV and the REV Commentary. Of course, we still have a long way to go. It will be many years before the project is complete. But in the meantime, feel free to check out our progress online. We update the free downloadable PDF files every two months.

Do you have a New Testament verse you want to understand better? Perhaps something that is sticking out and difficult to understand? The REV will be an excellent resource for you! **Visit STFonline.org/rev**

Notes:

1. John W. Schoenheit, *Revised English Version*® (REV®), and *The REV Commentary of the New Testament*, (Martinsville, IN: Spirit & Truth Fellowship International, Inc., 2009).
2. Scripture quotations marked (NRSV) are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
3. For more on the proper translation of this verse visit TruthOrTradition.com/john9

TEENS AND 20s NEEDED!
If you would like to write a short article for Fuel for the Fire,
please contact us at STF@STFonline.org

Figures of Speech

Hendiadys (Two for One)

by John W. Schoenheit

The ability to communicate with words is one thing that sets mankind apart from all other creatures. God is the Author of language, and no one has ever used language as precisely as God does in the Bible, including His use of figures of speech, of which there are more than 200 varieties in Scripture.¹ When most people say, “a figure of speech,” they are speaking in general terms of something that is not true to fact. However, genuine “figures of speech” are legitimate grammatical and lexical forms that add emphasis and feeling to what we say and write. In the Bible, God uses figures of speech to emphasize things that He wants us to see as important. Many people who read the Bible never think to ask themselves, “How do we know what God wants emphasized in His Word?” God uses figures of speech to put emphasis where He wants emphasis, so it is important that we recognize and properly interpret the figures of speech in the Bible. Knowing the figures of speech God uses in the Bible helps us to understand the true meaning of Scripture and enables us to more fully enjoy its richness.

The figure of speech we are going to study in this issue of *The Sower* is Hendiadys (pronounced hen-’dī-ə-dəs), or “two for one.” Webster’s defines this figure well: “the expression of an idea by the use of two usually independent words connected by ‘and’ (“nice and warm”) instead of the usual combination of an independent word and its modifier (“nicely warm”).² In Hendiadys the two words are the same part of speech (i.e., two nouns, two verbs, etc.), and if they are nouns, they are always in the same case. The figure Hendiadys places equal emphasis on both words conjoined by the “and,” whereas if the concept was rendered literally, such as “nicely warm,” the emphasis of the phrase is on the noun, not the modifier.

The difficulty with Hendiadys is that two nouns conjoined by “and” are not always a Hendiadys, and in fact sometimes it can be very difficult to tell whether the author meant the word to stand independently or be considered one thought.³ In Hendiadys the two words have a relationship to one another that can be clearly seen, but the Hendiadys must logically fit the context and scope of Scripture as well. For example, when Peter saw the lame man on the Temple steps and said, “Silver and gold have I none...” (Acts 3:6 KJV), even though silver and gold were both metals used for currency, there is no Hendiadys. Peter did not say, in effect, “Silvery gold have I none.” The two nouns, though in close relation to each other and joined by “and,” are not the figure of speech Hendiadys.

Another aspect of Hendiadys occurs when both words are true when taken separately, but also there is a sense of one noun modifying the other as well. In other words, in that particular case, the phrase has both the emphasis and meaning of a Hendiadys and yet does not have the exclusive meaning of a Hendiadys because both words’ individual meanings seem to be clearly in the text.

Genesis 3:16b (ASV)⁴

“I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy conception...”

The Hendiadys is clear: Eve will experience a great increase in “conception pain,” which we know as the pain of childbirth. In fact, many modern versions read “pain in childbirth” or something very similar to that.

Genesis 19:24 (KJV)

Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

This is an example of a case where each noun within the verse seems to be correct as it stands on its own, but the Hendiadys is also true. This verse says that Yahweh, the God of Israel, rained “brimstone and fire” down upon the cities of Sodom and upon Gomorrah. “Brimstone” is an old word for sulfur, which is why it generally appears in the older versions such as the *King James Version* just quoted. But it was not just sulfur that God rained down upon those cities along with fire, as if the sulfur came down in little chunks like hail, but rather by the figure Hendiadys, God rained “burning sulfur” from heaven. Some English versions read “burning sulfur,” which, although it does away with the Hendiadys in the text, makes the Bible easier to understand for many people (NIV; HCSB). But it is also likely that there was fire that fell from heaven apart from the sulfur, so changing “sulfur and fire” to “burning sulfur” is not necessarily right either. The NLT⁵ thus perhaps picks up the sense of the text very nicely by recognizing both the Hendiadys and the individual meanings of the words as well, by reading, “fire and burning sulfur.”

2 Samuel 20:19b (KJV)

thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?

When King David’s general Joab was attacking the city of Abel Beth Maacah, a wise woman spoke to him about stopping his siege. When she used the phrase, “... a city and a mother in Israel,” that is the figure, Hendiadys. Abel Beth Maacah was a “mother city” in Israel, which some translations render simply as an “important city.”

Isaiah 1:13 (NIV)

Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies.

The Hendiadys in the last phrase of this verse has made it hard to translate, but the meaning is clear, and the NIV has done a superb job of bringing that meaning into English: The last phrase is rendered more literally in the ESV⁶: “I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.” God usually desires solemn assemblies, but in this case the people were so evil that the solemn assemblies they held were corrupted and evil. The figure Hendiadys recognizes and emphasizes that the people were holding assemblies, but also emphasizes that those assemblies were wicked.

Luke 21:15 (ESV)

“for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.”

It is obvious that this verse is a figure of speech, because everyone has a mouth and therefore has no need for God to give them one. Actually, there are a couple figures of speech in this verse, and we will unpack them one at a time. “A mouth and wisdom” is the figure Hendiadys for “a wise mouth,” but the figure is better than the literal statement because saying someone has a “mouth” places emphasis on the fact that there will be much speaking. Someone may have a “wise mouth” but not say much, but someone who has a “mouth” says a lot. This is one of the instances where the literal expression “mouth and wisdom” and the figurative expression “wise mouth” are both true. God will inspire much speaking and give wisdom to the speaker as well. Perhaps, “I will give you a mouth, indeed, a wise mouth,” would be a good rendition. Also, “mouth” is not literal, but is put by the figure Metonymy for the words spoken by the mouth, so in teasing out the figures a little further, a good translation might be: “I will give you (many) words, indeed, wise words.”

Acts 3:14 (Bishop’s New Testament; 1595)

“But ye denyed the holy and iust, and desired a murtherer to be geuen you” [spelling from 1595].

The Bishop's New Testament literally renders "holy" and "just" as the adjectives that they are in the Greek text ("just" can also be translated "righteous"). Technically, "holy" and "just" are substantives, adjectives with "substance" if you will, and thus they stand in the place of nouns. Therefore, the translation, "You denied the Holy One and the Just One..." would perhaps be better, and certainly more easily understood than simply "holy" and "just." The problem, of course, is that by saying "the Holy One" and "the Just One," a beginning reader might think that the Jews denied two people. Anyone familiar with the Gospel story knows that only Jesus is being referred to, and he is the "righteous holy One." Most translations leave both adjectives but add the word "One" only one time at the end of the phrase, such that the verse reads something like, "But you denied the Holy and Just One..."

Notes:

1. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted 1968).
2. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition*. (Merriam-Webster, Inc., Springfield, MA, 2004), p. 581.
3. This author freely admits he disagrees with many of the examples of Hendiadys in Bullinger's book on figures of speech.
4. Scripture quotations marked (ASV) are taken from *The American Standard Version*, 1901.
5. Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, *New Life Translation*, copyright 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.
6. Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are taken from The Holy Bible, *English Standard Version*TM. © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved.

**For more figures of speech used in the Bible visit
TruthOrTradition.com/figures**

Jesus Christ the Cornerstone

by John W. Schoenheit

In both the Old and New Testaments, God figuratively refers to Jesus Christ as a “stone.” However, before we delve into some of what God has pictured for us, it helps if we think of stones the way the ancients did. Modern society does not have the awe and respect for large stones that the ancients did. Nowadays, if a boulder is in an inconvenient place, we just get a bulldozer and move it, or we blow it apart with dynamite, which was simply not available to do in the ancient world. Usually an “inconvenient” boulder in the road would be inconvenient for generations, and the large stones in the foundation and walls of buildings could only be set in place by armies of men working under the orders of the king.

When God refers to His Son with various stone analogies, it is important that we take the time to reflect upon what God is saying and what that means to our lives, because just as a real stone can be viewed from different angles, so can the “Rock,” Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 10:4).

The Cornerstone in the Old Testament

Hundreds of years before the Messiah was born, the Psalms contained an accurate prophecy that although he would be rejected by the builders, he would become the cornerstone.

Psalm 118:22 (KJV)

The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner.

In the ancient world, the cornerstone was the most important stone in the building. It set the level, angle, and outer dimensions of the building. It had to be level and squared true (vertical) so that all the other stones could be set from it. If it were not level, then as the walls of the building were erected, they will lean and fall.

We are used to thinking of Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of the Church. However, Psalm 118:22 referred to the Messiah as the cornerstone, but of what? Israel was never referred to as a Temple or other building, and there were no prophecies of the Christian Church being a Temple. The ancients understood that calling the Messiah a “cornerstone” was metaphorical, and that by the decree of God Almighty, the Messiah was to be the very foundation and cornerstone of God’s new creation. The Creation we live in now is ruined by sin, in bondage to decay, and in great pain, like the pain of childbirth (Rom. 8:21 and 22). Thankfully, God will rebuild “a new heaven and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17), using Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of His new creation. Furthermore, Jesus is the cornerstone and foundation of the New Testament Church. But the cornerstone could not be a freshly cut, untested stone that might fracture under the weight of what it supports. The stone God laid as the foundation, His only Son, was precious to Him, and tested over and over in the crucible of life.

Isaiah 28:16

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.”¹

God’s “cornerstone” was the Messiah, and although God had stated in many prophecies that the Messiah would come out of Judah, even from the line of David, He restated that again in Zechariah, making it crystal clear that the “cornerstone” was not an institution, or just some great ruler, but the chosen Messiah himself.

Zechariah 10:4

From Judah will come the cornerstone, from him the tent peg, from him the battle bow, from him every ruler.²

The Cornerstone in the Four Gospels

Jesus Christ knew he was the promised Messiah, and he demonstrated that in many ways. Once, when he was in the Temple teaching and being confronted by the religious leaders, he quoted Psalm 118 about the stone that the builders rejected becoming the “head of the corner.” However, he added something that should catch our attention:

Luke 20:18

Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.

It is clear that people can trip and fall on a cornerstone, but how does the cornerstone fall upon someone? While it is true that every analogy has weaknesses and none are a “perfect fit,” there is a truth here that is buried in the biblical text. The same word that was used for “cornerstone” was also sometimes used for the “capstone,” the final stone, often very decorative, that was placed at the top of the building and completed it. In fact, although most translations read “cornerstone,” the NIV says “capstone” (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17).

Scholars have debated for years as to whether “cornerstone” or “capstone” is the “right” translation. There are some very good reasons why “cornerstone” should be the preferred translation in our English versions, which by nature are forced to make a choice between the two words. However, it is wise to see the possibilities in both meanings (and perhaps make a marginal note in your Bible). After all, Jesus is called “the Alpha and Omega,” “the Beginning and the End,” and “the First and the Last” (Rev. 1:17; 21:6). If Jesus is the first and beginning stone, he is the cornerstone, and if he is the last and end stone, he is the capstone. In truth, Jesus is both the very foundation of God’s work, and also the highly visible and beautiful capstone that will finish His creation.

The Cornerstone in the Epistles

Both the Church Epistles and the General Epistles added much clarity and light to the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah as the cornerstone, and also added other analogies that gave even more depth and richness to the “stone” analogy in the Old Testament. As we noted above, Romans 8 (and other New Testament verses as well), clarified that it was indeed the entire creation that would be founded upon Christ. Also, the Christian Church started on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and God made it clear that just as the Messiah is the cornerstone, the Christian Church is the Temple itself (1 Cor. 3:16), and each Christian is a living stone (1 Pet. 2:5). The Church is being “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20, ESV³).⁴

As we read about the Cornerstone in the New Testament, it is important to notice that Psalm 118:22 is quoted five times (the three in the Gospels are referenced above). It is clear that as well as placing an emphasis on Jesus as the cornerstone of God’s foundation, God emphasizes the fact that people will reject him.

Acts 4:11 (ESV)

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

1 Peter 2:7 (ESV)

So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”

The universe is not a democracy, but a kingdom. God is the King, and in His love and grace He has made His Son His vice-regent and the cornerstone and foundation of His creation. But what has happened here on earth? The majority of mankind does not recognize the solid foundation God provided for them. Instead, for many different reasons, people have built their lives on things other than Jesus Christ. These people are unsaved, and without someone’s intervening in their lives and bringing them to Christ, they will “perish” (John

3:16). The fact that the unsaved are facing certain destruction should stir up compassion in each Christian, and we should aggressively share our faith with those who are unsaved, doing our best to ensure that they too will live forever.

Although many people reject Christ outright, there is another, more subtle, way that people reject him. That more subtle way is when a person takes Jesus Christ as the foundation of his life, but then in practice rejects him. We do this when we build upon Christ according to our will and pleasure, rather than building according to God's plans and in obedience to the Word of God. If our works are not built according to God's directions, they will be burned up on the fiery Day of Judgment (1 Cor. 3:12-15). Jesus Christ is the cornerstone and foundation of our lives and the Bible is our book of building codes. Christians are to faithfully pray, meet together, share our resources with others, tell the Good News to the unsaved, live godly lives, and much more. It is not enough to just have a foundation; each Christian needs to build upon it in a way that is pleasing to God.

It is also important that we recognize that for countless generations the stone that God lovingly laid to be the foundation of His new creation has been a stone of stumbling to those who reject him. This truth is so profound that God stated it in Isaiah 8:14, and then quoted and clarified it in both Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:8. Despite God's clear warning that Jesus will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to people, many Christians water down the stark life-and-death reality of salvation through Jesus Christ by being apologetic about it. Although God is both loving and honest in His Word about the fiery death that awaits those who reject His Messiah, many Christians do not like presenting that truth to those who do not believe, and some even try to explain it away, which is neither helpful nor loving. Of course, to be so bold as to say that those who reject God's Messiah will not live forever offends many non-Christians, and then they lash out at the one who brought them the message of Christ. But that is to be expected, right? People's offence at the "rock of offence" is not just going to be focused toward God on Judgment Day, is it? Jesus warned us that we would be rejected by the world.

John 15:18-20 (abridged)

(18) If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

(19)...I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you...

(20) ...'No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also...

Christians are to boldly present Jesus Christ to people. Some will accept him and to them he will be precious and a sure foundation, while to those who reject him and go their own way he will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. Those offended people will persecute Christians and then, as Paul wrote, "the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives" (2 Cor. 1:5). That suffering will cause some Christians to shrink back from the spiritual battle and cease to love others enough to keep spreading the Good News about Christ, while other Christians will press forward, proving their faith genuine in the fire of the persecution, and will treasure up for themselves rewards that will be given out in their future life.

Nothing is truer than God's statement that, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Jesus Christ is God's foundation stone, and capstone, for mankind and the universe. Let us build our lives upon him, and help others to do the same.

Notes:

1. Many versions close this verse with "...not be in haste" or something similar. This is the figure of speech Metonymy, where the effect, making haste, which is referring to fleeing away in haste, is stated instead of the reason for doing so, which is shame or dismay for not trusting in God's "precious stone," His Messiah.
2. Although the word "Judah" in the NIV is not the Hebrew text of Zechariah 10:4, verse 3 makes it clear that it is the tribe of Judah from which the cornerstone will come.
3. Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are taken from The Holy Bible, *English Standard Version*™. © 2001 by Crossway

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4. In Ephesians 2:20 and 1 Peter 2:6 God uses *akrogōniaios*, which is a compound word using *akros*, extreme, and *gōnia*, corner, literally means “extreme corner.” In contrast, the Gospels, Acts 4:11, and 1 Peter 2:7 use the phrase *kephalē gōnia*, literally, the “head” of the “corner.” Scholars debate the meaning of *akrogōniaios* also, as some say it means “cornerstone” and others say “capstone.” Interestingly, while the NIV used “capstone” for *kephalē gōnia*, “the head of the corner,” they use “cornerstone” for *akrogōniaios*, while other translations that used “cornerstone” for *kephalē gōnia*, use “capstone” for *akrogōniaios*.

**Available online at
TruthOrTradition.com/cornerstone**

What Are You Building On?

Since mankind began building buildings, the question of the strength of the foundation has been of prime importance. Buildings that have a firm foundation do well. Buildings that do not have one generally do not do well, even if they only lean, like the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

Many people today mistakenly believe that the best they can do in life is “build a solid financial foundation” that will protect them from disaster. Therefore they have savings and investment accounts, a retirement plan, and health and disability insurance. However, that kind of planning ignores the worst kind of disaster, which is death. The only plan that protects against death is Life Insurance. No, not the kind of life insurance that companies sell so that your family gets money when you die (how does that “insure” your life? You die!). God’s Life Insurance is really Life Insurance. When you die, God raises you back to life! Not just to regular life, but to Everlasting Life. And a bonus part of the contract is that you get to live that life in a wonderful place!

You have bought insurance before, and you know that this is the part where you ask, “How much will it cost me?” It’s FREE! Just when you were about to pull out your wallet and pay, Jesus Christ stepped up and paid the price for you. Now all you have to do is reach out and take insurance for Everlasting Life by confessing him as Lord and believing God raised him from the dead.

Romans 10:9

That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

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The Vine

The Pillar & Bulwark of Truth

by Michael L. Patten

At Spirit & Truth Fellowship we believe strongly in the first-century model of the “home church,” that is, a group of Christ’s followers who get together regularly in whatever format they choose, for the purpose of spiritual growth and support. The home church most closely follows the pattern God provided for basic relational interaction, which is the family. God has provided the best foundation for both families and churches, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11).

1 Timothy 3:14 and 15

(14) Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that,
(15) if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation (*hedraioma*) of the truth.

Robertson says of *hedraioma*: “Probably it means *stay* or *support* rather than foundation or ground.”¹ Moffatt translates this word as “bulwark, a defensive wall.”² This verse establishes the purpose of the Church in the context of relationship (how people ought to conduct themselves). The Church is to be a *pillar* where the truth is displayed for others to see and a *bulwark* defending the integrity and veracity of God’s holy Word. Both the “pillar” and “bulwark” rest upon the foundation, who is Jesus Christ.

God has always related to people through the prism of family. He goes to great lengths developing the narratives of family dynamics to convey truth. Examples in the Old Testament are many and varied. A few poignant examples are: Ruth, Naomi and Boaz; Esther and Mordecai; and David’s family. One of the most dramatic, perhaps, is the contrast between two families in 1 Samuel. The book opens with Elkanah, whose wife Hannah was barren. As Hannah beseeches the Lord earnestly, her prayer is answered and a son is born. In gratitude, Hannah dedicates the boy, Samuel, to the Lord. Even though Hannah is the main character in this drama, we have a snapshot of this family where Elkanah, the husband, is serving as the head.

1 Samuel 1:21

When the man Elkanah went up with all of his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to fulfill his vow,

Many times when this record is considered, the heart and commitment of Hannah is the focus, and with good reason. Yet, as we look closely we see *both* of Samuel’s parents steadfastly ministering to the Lord. 1 Samuel 1:3 tells us that Elkanah went up to worship at Shiloh *year after year*. It is very obvious that Samuel received a solid foundation of faith from both parents. The family of Eli the priest however stands in stark contrast.

1 Samuel 2:11 and 12

(11) Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the LORD under Eli the priest.
(12) Eli’s sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD.

God devotes 40 verses to display Samuel’s family, a godly couple who dedicate their only son to the Lord. Then, in one short, terse statement God reveals the tragedy that defines Eli’s family. The consequence of Eli’s failure as a father is dramatic. By the end of chapter four he and his sons are dead and the ark of God is captured by the Philistines. Just as with these two families, every family is defined in significant ways by parents

fulfilling their calling to lead their children in God's ways, or by the tragedy that results from not doing so.

Both aspects of the *pillar* and *bulwark* of truth are evident in the life of Samuel. As prophet to Israel, Samuel spoke for God and thus clearly set forth truth from God for Saul, the man who would be king. Later he had to defend the truth by confronting Saul.

1 Samuel 15:1

Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the LORD.

1 Samuel 15:26

But Samuel said to him, "I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!"

God has always needed great people like Samuel to set forth, and stand for, the truth. Jesus Christ was the epitome of this, and so it follows that God would make it clear to all of us in Christ's Body what qualifies a person for leadership in His Church. In the Apostle Paul's first letter to his protégé, Timothy, qualifications for positions of responsibility within the Church are listed in chapter 3. These qualifications for both overseers (*episkopos*) as well as servants (*diakonos*, "deacons") have several qualifying traits common to both. This is quite logical since overseers will have previously proven themselves as ones who serve well.

In effect, Paul's letter to Timothy provides us with a developmental track of training for church leadership in reverse order, because he covers overseers first, then those who serve in official capacities in the Church. Paul, with authority from Christ (1 Tim. 1:11), is mentoring his replacement, Timothy (1 Tim. 1:18) as to how leaders in the church will be identified from among those serving (1 Tim. 3:1-15). One of the qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3 for both those who serve, as well as those who oversee the work, is related to the management of their personal families:

1 Timothy 3:12

A deacon (*diakonos*) must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.

A prerequisite to holding positions of responsibility in any church is managing one's own family well. This is true of a *diakonos*, one who serves in a given capacity on behalf of the church, and then later for those who are called to be overseers (*episkopos*) within the church.

1 Timothy 3:4 and 5

(4) He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.

(5) (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)

Paul closes out this section on qualifications by reiterating the basic premise of how God views the Church of Jesus Christ in light of the family unit (1 Tim. 3:14 and 15). Both aspects of *pillar* and *bulwark* are vital to the health of families and churches. If one is lacking, eventually the other will be in jeopardy. God has given His Word so that we might know what His family looks like. In that picture will be seen a pillar and a bulwark of the truth resting firmly upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, The Rock of Ages.

Notes:

1. Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1931), 4:576.
2. James Moffatt, *A New Translation of the Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1935).

The ABC's of God

The Miracles

by Cara Hanson

Any pain or fear that Mary experienced during labor and delivery was undoubtedly replaced by joy as she held the baby Jesus in her arms. The gospel of Luke informs us that Mary swaddled her newborn and laid him in a manger (Luke 2:7), but the Word is deafeningly silent about her emotions during this time. It is as though a privacy curtain was closed out of respect and reverence for this new family sharing a sacred moment. No words can adequately express the feelings of a new parent, although one verse gives us a glimpse:

John 16:21

A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.

If a woman experiences such joy from bringing forth a child, imagine how God must feel. He “fearfully and wonderfully” knit us together in the womb (Ps. 139:13-16). During my first pregnancy, an ultrasound revealed that my embryo had implanted in a very precarious position and had less than a 1% chance of survival. While it was too early at this point to even detect a heartbeat, all signs pointed toward a miscarriage for our first baby. Dave and I were devastated, but we were immediately on our knees pleading with God for the life of our baby.

That night I felt a horrible scraping sensation across my lower abdomen. The pain was so severe that my knuckles turned white as I gripped the arm of the couch. We continued to pray for a miracle. At my second ultrasound, it was time to face the music.

Don't give up hope. My doctor's optimistic advice rang in my head as I waited for the results. I turned my head to the wall as the ultrasound technician scanned my belly. If there was bad news, I didn't want to see it firsthand. I was reminded of Hezekiah, who turned his face to the wall and prayed when he learned of his fate (Isa. 38:2). God heard his prayers and had mercy on him. (Please, Father, have mercy now.)

My heart skipped a beat when the technician asked, “Don't you want to see the heartbeat?” Nothing could have prepared me for what I saw when I turned my head back toward the monitor. For the first time, I saw our baby, in the form of a giant heart beating furiously on the screen. It was beating, Hi, Mommy! Hi, Mommy! Tears flowed like rain down my face, and I tried to gain control as I asked the technician about the location of the embryo. She left the room to ask the doctor, who confirmed that our baby was now “inexplicably” in the perfect location. Our first baby, named Grace for God's divine favor, was truly a miracle baby.

Even though our second and third babies arrived without all the drama of the first, their lives are still miraculous. A “miracle” is defined as “An event that appears inexplicable by the laws of nature, held to be supernatural or an act of God.”¹ When you consider how pregnancy and the entire gestational and childbirth processes require rigidly perfect conditions and timing, any baby is a “miracle.” Only God could achieve such a seemingly impossible feat!

The first chapter of 1 Samuel recounts how Hannah desperately longed for a baby. She poured her soul out to God, promising to give her baby in service to Him if He would grant her request. He gave her baby Samuel, and Hannah kept her promise by bringing him to serve at the House of the Lord with Eli. As a mother, I can't even begin to fathom the emotional distress of leaving her young son. In the second chapter, a verse seems tucked away, almost as an afterthought, but it pierces my soul at every reading:

1 Samuel 2:21

And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters.

God understood Hannah's longing to have children, because He also has had that same desire. He was gracious to her by giving her more children! God knew that one day He also would not spare His only Son, but give him up for us all (Rom. 8:32). Out of the sacrifice of that one son, He gained innumerable more children in those who would believe!

I have often been out walking with our three young children, only to be greeted by comments such as, "Good luck!" or "Better you than me!" Sometimes I also hear, "Wow, you must have your hands full." I always respond, "Praise God," and they shoot me that look that says, "I didn't mean it in a positive way." These comments are mostly from parents whose precious miracle babies did the unthinkable—they grew up and stopped being so adorable. In these selfish times, children are often thought of as "inconveniences," when God intends for them to be blessings!

I have fallen victim to this trap on many occasions. Babies are easy to love when they are sweet, innocent, and completely dependent. Suddenly Junior starts talking back, and you wonder why you spent so much time teaching him how to talk in the first place. Then one day he throws a temper tantrum in the middle of a crowded parking lot. His body freezes and develops rigor mortis, and he refuses to budge, despite honking horns and scornful glances. You force an awkward smile and wave, pretending that you were only walking to your car when someone else's child mysteriously threw himself at your feet. Years later, in a moment that defines "irony," your teenager proclaims, "Mom, you're embarrassing me." If God loves the godly and the ungodly, then parents can love the baby and the toddler—and every other stage as well.

Every person we see was at one time a "miracle baby," but let's face it: people are a lot easier to love before, shall we say, potty training. God loved us all so much that Jesus died for us when we were "still sinners" (Rom. 5:8). Consider the following:

James 3:9 and 10

(9) With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness.

(10) Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

I can't help myself—during football season, if fans are screaming at a player that he is a "LOSER," I think, "But that's somebody's baby!" (This is probably why I don't get invited to Super Bowl parties.) If a parent feels a strong emotional bond with his or her baby, imagine how God must feel about each of His children. He loves, protects, and blesses each one of us more than an earthly parent ever could.

Isaiah 49:15 and 16

(15) Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!

(16) See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.

One year my father was invited to a party for the 4th birthday of his friend's daughter. He went shopping for the gift by himself and was very proud of his purchase of a small bottle of bubble soap and wand. (Now, when I say "small," I mean it could've gotten lost amongst the lint in his pocket.) When he returned from the party, he shared the amusing story of how he had walked into this child's backyard and witnessed all of the kids gathered around the birthday girl's brand new Bubble Play House Factory. My poor dad glanced down at the miniature bubble wand in his hand and then watched as a Factory Bubble the size of the ozone layer rose twenty feet into the air and burst, along with his ego. The moral of this story is that anything we try to provide for our own

children is a bubble wand compared to God's Bubble Factory.

When my children are sad, I do everything in my power to help them rejoice again. When they are sick, I want nothing more than to see them healed. In everything they do, I desire blessings and victories. God wants only the best for His children, so how can we ever doubt that He will heal our hearts and bodies and provide for every need in our lives? Why do we worry so much about our jobs, our finances, our health, and our relationships?

3 John 1:2 (KJV)

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

God desired our lives even when we were still in the womb. He didn't need an ultrasound to rejoice at seeing the first beatings of our hearts. If He could have ultrasound pictures of us, He would proudly display them on His fridge and endure the endless angel questions of "Which end is the head?" (He would know.) It doesn't matter what we have been through or where we are now...He desires us still. We will always be His "little children," and He patiently tolerates our temper tantrums, our backtalk, and all of our shortcomings. The joy that He felt on that holy night when Christ was born is the joy He has for our lives! No matter what, we will always be His "miracle babies."

1 John 3:1

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!
And that is what we are!

Note:

1. *The American Heritage College Dictionary*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1993.

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Dear Sower

Our YouTube Channel

I would just like to congratulate you for a very well done job with your YouTube channel. I am immensely blessed by it. Hearing God's Word and studying it is always just a click away. These almost 10-minute teachings are powerful and awesome. I can see the love you offered on making the videos posted and I appreciate it dearly. God bless you always.

Hananish Joy G. Odarve
Mindanao State University
Philippines

Editor's Note:

Check out our YouTube channel at TruthOrTradition.com/youtube

Facebook Feedback

Thanks for so many answers to so many questions that I have always wondered about. I love the videos and other study material.

Rose Shelton

Editor's Note:

Visit our Facebook page at TruthOrTradition.com/facebook for free Bible study resources.

Start the Day off Right

The ten-minute teaching videos on TruthOrTradition.com/youtube are an excellent tool for me to start my day and hold thoughts of God's Words throughout my day. When I got to Elaine Landmark's study on Psalm 42, I must say that her teaching reached out and spoke to me. It was, for me, the Word fitly spoken.

I cannot begin to express my thanksgivings for a truly beautiful display of practice to close the gap, to relieve and eliminate feelings of internal turmoil and a distance from God that apparently are common to every believer, from time to time. It is as simple as remembering the goodness of God. Thank you,

Victoria Carrel
Charleston, WV

Editor's Note:

Check out our YouTube channel at TruthOrTradition.com/youtube to view our 10-minute video teachings and subscribe for free!

Treasure Chest of Truth

What a treasure chest of truth for our souls to feed on for spiritual nourishment and vitality. Thank you for your awesome work. It is rather evident God and His Son are powerfully at work in your ministries.

Praise God!
God Bless you!
(A YouTube subscriber)

Editor's Note:

This feedback was left on our YouTube video channel at TruthOrTradition.com/youtube

Article on Communion

I want to thank you for putting this on the web (our article on Communion)!!! The subject of taking communion came up at the Bible study and one lady said it should be done only in church. You have cleared this up so I don't have to say a word. In fact, you cleared it up for me as part of making it part of each meal. This is better than saying grace by far!!! God bless you!

Deborah

Editor's Note:

For a very practical article & video on the taking of communion, see TruthOrTradition.com/communion

September Audio Teaching

I just listened to "Is Everything That Happens God's Will?"(Our Sep. 2009 Teaching of the Month). Thank you, John. What a powerful message! I want everyone to listen to it. It is truth that I have known, but it is on my heart today in this day and time to witness this to others. I had a brother who was murdered in 1990 and both my parents have Alzheimer. If I believed that it was God's will, I don't believe I would love God and Jesus like I do.

Sheri K.
Indianapolis, IN

Editor's Note: To listen to our free online audio teachings, visit TruthOrTradition.com/audio