1 Kings - Commentaries by Charles Stanley

Pamphlets, Great Stones and Costly

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"And he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God" (1 Chron. 22:2).

I need not say that the building of Solomon's Temple is one of the most interesting studies of antiquity and when that building on Mount Moriah is seen as the type of God's present heavenly building, it becomes infinitely more interesting.

In this building, then, the first thing that presents itself is this: David, the father, provides beforehand the materials of this temple; even the stones, the iron, and brass in abundance, without weight. He says, "I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold" — a talent of gold being worth about £5475, the value of this gold would be £547,500,000 sterling — "and a thousand thousand talents of silver."

A talent of silver being worth upwards of £342, the silver would be worth more than £342,000,000 sterling. Thus David's provision for this costly building, in gold and silver, was up-wards of £889,000,000 sterling, besides an incalculable quantity of brass, iron, wood, and stone. Such was David's provision for this costly temple. Besides, the riches of Solomon, the son, were quite equal to those of the father David. 1 Kings 10 gives some idea, of Solomon's riches. The gold alone that came to kiln in a year was equal to £3,646,350 (vs. 14).

More than 150,000 men were employed in the rearing of this wondrous building (1 Kings 5:5). "And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house" (1 Kings 5:17). Now what do "great stones" mean? A builder in this country would consider a stone three feet every way a great stone. But we find these great foundation stones, sawn and hewn, were indeed "costly stones, even great stones; stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits" (1 Kings 7:10-11). A cubit, at the lowest, is one foot six inches: it is the measure from the elbow of a man to the end of his fingers. Thus these great stones were at least twelve feet every way, and fifteen feet every way. If you dust east it up, you will find they weighed about 250 tons each. There was one stone in the temple, after its restoration, thirty feet by thirteen by seven and a half feet. There are similar great stones in the ruins at Balbec, which may have been built by Solomon, called the "House of the forest of Lebanon." Solomon built three houses, which answer, I doubt not, to the threefold glory of Christ; and as the same sized stones formed the foundation of each (1 Kings 7:11), so is Christ the foundation-stone, alike, of the Church of God in heavenly places, the future kingdom of Israel, and of millennial blessing to the whole world. The cross we shall find to be the foundation of all.

To return to that which occupies us at present, the temple. Vast quantities of cedar trees were brought from Lebanon. But for many centuries there has been a difficulty as to where and how these great, costly stones were obtained. A dear friend, who lives near Jerusalem, told me a few years ago that there are immense caves under Jerusalem. And the quantity of broken stones, but especially some great atones, half cut, but never finished, makes it clear that these great stones were got out of pits, prepared in this manner- the top was leveled and marked out, then the sides were cut by drifts, then the under side cut. But just think of the greatness of the labor required, in raising these great stones of the pit out to daylight, and moving them, and putting them in their place. Isaiah may have referred to these caverns when he speaks of the stones of the pit (Isa. 14:19).

The temple was built on a rock, by the side of a frightful precipice. We are told by historians that 600 feet of foundation work had to be built to the level, on one side, where Solomon's porch stood. The foundation stones were dovetailed, or mortised, in a most wonderful manner into the very rock. The joint was so finely wrought that it could scarcely be found. Thus they were rooted, and grounded, and built, into the very rock.

And the house, when it was building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither, so that "there was neither hammer, nor ax, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was building" (1 Kings 6:7). Thus the silent growth of this earthly temple set forth the predestined heavenly building of God. As David the father gave materials to Solomon the son, even so Jesus says, "My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My hands" (John 10). And again, "As thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life TO AS MANY AS THOU HAST GIVEN HIM" (John 17:2). "All that the Father GIVETH ME shall come to Me: and him that cometh to Me I will in nowise cast out." "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath GIVEN ME I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day (John 6:39). Yes, he would be a foolish builder who began to build, and did not know whether he had materials to finish. And it is blessed to remember that God, the great master builder, foreknew every stone chosen, and precious, that is built and shall be built in the heavenly temple.

Is it not most plain that those great stones, 250 tons weight, never got out of the pit by any effort or work of their own? As we say, they would never have seen daylight if they had not been drawn out. You might just as well have put a ladder of ten steps, and told these stones to climb up it and get out of darkness, as set the ten commandments before a dead sinner, and tell him to try and climb them, and so get out of the pit of sin. Jesus said to those who had long been trying this plan, "No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).

In the judgment of a builder, there would be no way of getting those great stones out of the pit, but by going into the pit, hewing and drawing them. out. And all that were drawn out were out, and no others. Now, does not the cross of our Lord Jesus reveal God's judgment of this matter as to sinners? If David counted the cost of this earthly temple in gold and silver, God also counted the cost. The price was the blood of the Lamb. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18). If those were great stones and costly, surely believers are great stones and costly. "He spared not His only-begotten Son, but gave Him up for us all." I am not much of a mason; but I should say a stone fifteen feet cube

would cost no trifle. And, fellow believer, fellow-stone in the living temple, think what you have cost.

Thus God saw no way of raising sinners from the dead but by sending His Son to die for them. “We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” And having died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was numbered with the dead. There was the end of all judgment due to our sins. The full ransom-price was paid. Despised, indeed, He was of men: yea, never was a stone so rejected by masons, as was this stone by Judah’s builders. But, oh! what were God’s thoughts of His blessed Son as He lay in the grave? God saw Him the foundation-stone. As our substitute, all our sins had been laid on Him. “So Christ bare the sins of many.” And now, infinite atonement being made by His precious blood, this stone, rejected by man, was raised from the dead by God. Therefore “this is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:10-12). Language cannot find words to express “the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised him from the dead” (Eph. 1:19-20). The raising of those great stones was, indeed, a grand figure of this; but what would have been the power required, if every stone of the temple had to have been raised up together with the first foundation-stone?

This heavenly temple, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, was chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1). Yet every. stone in this living temple, was once dead in trespasses and sins — ah! dead as stones; “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4-6). Now, whether we think of what we were as lost, dead, buried sinners, or what was the tremendous undertaking for one to stand our substitute, and bear the full, unmixed wrath of God due to our sins — or of what we shall forever be as living stones in the heavenly temple — surely the raising up of Christ, the foundation-stone, from the dead, and in Him the redeemed Church, and on Him its eternal destiny — the destiny of every saved sinner through eternal ages — I say, surely the raising of Christ, the foundation-stone, was the greatest event, the greatest work, that ever God wrought. Oh! vastly strange that this, God’s greatest work, should be so little thought of in our day.

Now the temple was built on the rock of Moriah — the place where divine lodgment was stayed by the altar of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; for there the Lord answered by fire upon the altar of burnt-offering (1 Chron. 21:26, 27): even so the voluntary offering of Jesus, and the shedding of His precious blood, is the foundation of every sinner saved by grace, from the deserved wrath of God. One thing is certain, that where the foundation-stone was laid, there the temple was built. Standing on that bold rock of Moriah, “the house that is to be budded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical of fame, and of glory, throughout all countries.” Now, when God raised Jesus, the foundation-stone, from the dead, where did He place Him? “Far above all principality and power,” etc. (Eph. 1:21). “And He is the head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence” (Col. 1:18). God did not raise him from the dead to improve the old creation, but to be the beginning of the new creation. Not to build an earthly house, or earthly society, but a heavenly temple. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ — Hath raised us up together, and made us sit together IN heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” That word IN Christ Jesus is very precious. It is very blessed to see this in the type; all those great stones were covered with cedar wood. “And the cedar of the arouse within was carved with knops and open flowers. All was cedar: there was no stone seen” (1 Kings 6:18). Thus in the heavenly building there is not a sinner seen. Every saved one, though once the greatest sinner, now fairly wainscotted in Christ — hid in Christ. And not only was the stone covered with cedar wood, but this overlaid with pure gold. “So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold.” “And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all the house” (vs. 22). It is written, fellow-believer, “Ye are complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:10). It was not the stones themselves that were seen, but the gold upon them: so it is not ourselves; but Christ upon us. Yes; the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ, in whom we are complete. And all within, how perfect! Beautiful carvings of knops and of open flowers; all covered with pure gold.

You observe all was done to these stones. Not one atom did they do. They were hewn, they were drawn out, they were built in the temple, they were covered with cedar. The pure gold was put upon them. It is so with the poor sinner. Salvation from beginning to end is all of God. Look at the poor prodigal. Not an atom of merit. The father met him as he was, fell upon his neck, and kissed him He had not to buy a new robe. No, the robe was ready, the shoes were ready, the ring was ready. Like the gold that covered the stones, so with this new best robe, he had not even to put it on. No, the father said, “Put it on him “ Just so with Joshua, when the filthy garments were taken away. God said, “Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.” “So they put a fair miter upon his head.” Yes, the new creation work is all of God. “Therefore, if any man be IN CHRIST, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new, and all things are of God” (2 Cor. 5:17). The fact is, all this seems too good to be true, and the poor heart is so slow to believe God. Yet true it is, and if the temple was for glory throughout all countries, this heavenly building of God is for God’s glory throughout all ages, predestinated “to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein HE HATH made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:6), “That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:7),” yea, “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10). If the change was great, as every stone was drawn out of the pit of darkness and placed in that temple of splendor and dazzling light, what is the change when a sinner is taken from the dungeon of darkness, “and built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, IN WHOM all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:20, 21). O! what thousands of poor sinners have been built into this heavenly temple of late. Silently and swiftly is God taking out the appointed stones.

To every believer God does not say, ‘Ye shall be built,’ but “ye are built.” Oh that every believing reader may enter into the full joy of being complete in Christ! For God has made such a blessed finish of it, within and without.

It may be asked, If salvation is so entirely of God, what has the person so saved to do? Well certainly he can do no more FOR his salvation, than the great stones and costly could do, for their hewing and drawing out of the pit. But let us turn to a passage in 1 Peter 2:4-10: “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ.” It is God who hath laid this chief cornerstone, elect, precious, “And he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded.” O! surely the more I see what God hath made Him to be to me, the more precious He will be; as it is written, “Unto you, therefore, which believe, HE IS PRECIOUS; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.” Yes, here is the grand test to every heart —

what is Christ to you? Can my reader say, He is everything to me: before Him I had nothing, and after Him I can have nothing. I do not ask what profession you make. Every religious builder who is trying to improve humanity, in one way or other, makes light of Christ. This whole world is one vast pit of darkness, sin, and death. God has no more thought in the gospel of improving this dark pit, than Solomon had, when taking the great stones out of the cavern of perpetual darkness. He took out the stones. God is now taking out of the world sinners for Himself. Now man disallows this. He sees no need of a new creation. He says, Why not build up and improve the old. And thus the new-creation temple, built on the risen Christ, from the dead, is almost forgotten amongst the builders; and instead of waiting for the coming of the Lord, and the manifestation of this heavenly building, men are vainly dreaming that Christianity will gradually improve this dark cavern of sin. The masons of Solomon would not have made a greater mistake, if, instead of going on, hewing and drawing, they had commenced building in the dark cavern.

No, believer. I ask you to look at yonder risen Christ, raised from among the dead. There see God's chosen foundation stone. Is He precious to you? Are you built on Him? The faith that rests in Him shall never be confounded. To thee the Spirit of God says, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation; a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). This is what the saved sinner should do.

Nothing can be more pleasing to God than thus to show forth his praise, who has taken us, like the stones of the pit, out of darkness: and as they bore the shining plates of gold that reflected and displayed the riches and magnificence of their great builder, even so may Christ be seen on each of us, reflecting and showing forth the exceeding riches of divine grace. O! what grace shone in all the ways of Jesus! Even when crucified on the accursed tree, still grace shone forth: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And that was a bright reflection of Christ, when they stoned Stephen to death. He said, as it were, "Do not say anything about it, lay not this sin to their charge." O! for more of the bright shirting of Christ in all and on all our ways. God would have us enter into the full joy of being able to give Him thanks, "WHO HATH made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. WHO HATH delivered us from the power of darkness, and HATH translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. In whom WE HAVE redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:12- 14). Is this my reader's joy? Can you thus give God all the glory? Are you in the pit or in the temple covered with sin, or covered with Christ? Ah! it was of no use, though cut, and hewn, and sawn on one side or every side, if still left in the pit; no place in the temple; no plates of gold; no knops and open flowers. Those half-cut stones in the caverns of Jerusalem are solemn warnings. You may have long-felt the ax and the saw of conviction, but are you out of the cavern? This must be the work of God. Paul "planted, and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. "So, then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." God is the builder. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:5-16). "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Now God's way of getting stones is in this manner — the Spirit of God taketh the ax of conviction and strikes deep; the Word of God is the power, unto salvation, to every one that believeth. I met a poor old sinner the other day, who thought that no poor stone ever had the chiseling he had had in the pit of sin. The Spirit of God enabled me to set the death and resurrection of Christ before him; and while quoting these words out he came, drawn out and delivered by the power of God. "Be it known unto you, therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe, are justified from all things." O! I love to see great stones drawn out of the pit. The old man said, "How blessed it will be to go home knowing I am saved." "Yes, indeed," I said. "And hearken to these words of Jesus, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (judgment), BUT is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). Yes, just as Lazarus heard the word of Jesus when down in the sepulcher of death, so was this old man "born again by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:23). The hour is come "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25).

If my reader has never yet heard that voice, may this be the hour. God grant that from this moment you may yield yourself up to God, as a stone in the hands of the mason, and clay in the hands of the potter.

We must not, however, carry the figure too far; for, while a sinner is, as to that which is good, as dead as a stone, yet, for that which is evil, he is terribly alive. Yes; a live rebel against God — a voluntary, willful rejecter of Christ, the only foundation-stone. "Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?" "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matt. 21:42-44).

In the day of judgment you will not be condemned, because you had been in the pit of darkness, but because you refused to be taken out. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world [the dark pit], and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The remembrance of the love of God in sending His Son to this dark pit of sin, will be like the worm that dieth not. Oh, what unutterable remorse!

Was it not in love to the bitten Israelites, that God bid Moses lift up the serpent in the wilderness? Even so has the Son of man been lifted up. For sinners Jesus died -lost, ungodly sinners. Yes; it was these God so loved. If He had only bid you get out of the pit yourself, you might have said, How could I, since I am as helpless as a stone. But He sent His Son, and you have rejected Him: you have refused to be saved. Oh! it would have been blessed had your heart been broken on Him with the sense of His love. But if not, it must be crushed before Him in the judgment with the sense of His everlasting wrath. A very little while, and the end of the present scene shall come. The stone cut out of the mountains shall smite the nations, and they shall become "like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor" (Dan. 2:34-45). This terrible day is closed by those solemn words, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:32-46). There is one point of contrast, however, between the earthly temple and the heavenly building we must notice. To have seen those huge blocks of stone so built in the rock, one would have thought they would have stood forever. But the time came when the Chaldeans prevailed against them. And, again, when (the temple was) restored (built by Herod) in later times, as our blessed Lord foretold, the Romans prevailed, until not one stone was left upon another. Where are those two pillars, "Jachin," which means, "He shall establish," and "Boaz," "in it is strength," though they were such brass pillars as the like were never cast? They stood at least twenty-seven feet high, and six feet diameter; yet they are removed and gone, and not a trace of this wondrous building remains. But Jesus, speaking of Himself, the only foundation, says, "Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Jesus did not say to Peter, Thou art this Rock; but, Thou art a stone. Yes; Peter, a stone, needed to be built on the rock as much as any man He found this need as much in the high priest's hall, as on the swelling billows. Christ is the foundation-rock; and that Rock is not at Rome, but in heaven. And where the foundation is, there must the building be. Ask a mason if this is not so. Yes; God is not building His Church at Rome, but in heavenly places in Christ. Against the

Church, so high, so blest, so secure, the gates of hell shall not prevail. How can they? Eve was not made or built of the flesh of Adam; but she was built of his very bone, and that bone so near his heart. And the Church, the spotless bride of Christ, all glorious within and without, is also built in Christ, so that “We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones (Eph. 5:30). Some talk about Christ letting the saint slip through His fingers. Nay, the devil would have to pull Christ’s fingers off before one of His little ones could perish. No, when time shall be no more, this holy building of God shall be seen “descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” Ah, then it will not be like the plates of gold covering the stones. We shall be changed. We shall be like Him, fashioned like unto His glorious body, like unto a stone most precious — no speck of sin, no dull shade of grief, no cloud of sorrows — clear AS CRYSTAL. This, my fellow-stone, is our eternity. Highest archangels will be ravished with wonder. “The streets of the city pure gold; as it were transparent glass.” Our feet, that now tread the dirty streets of this sin-defiled earth, shall soon tread the golden streets of the city of God. What heart can conceive what it will be to be there? No temple there to shut in and hide the glory. No; God and the Lamb are there. They are the temple of it. “The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” And all thine, my fellow-believer. Yes; though too bright for mortal eyes. Yet wait a little longer. A few more struggles, a few more victories over self, sin, and Satan, through Him that strengtheneth. Yes, though “Jachin” and “Boaz” be removed and gone, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God. And I will write upon him My new name.”1 Thus speaks Jesus, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of. God. Hark! he also speaks to God; “Father, I will that they also, whom thou halt given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which thou hast given Me.” Blessed Jesus, thy will shall be done: we shall soon be with thee. We ask no more. Thou couldst not ask more than for us than to be with thee.

There is but one point more and I close. (Read 1 Chron. 22:17-19). Now, if David thus commanded the princes of Israel to help Solomon, saying, “Is not the Lord your God with you, and hath He not given you rest on every side?” how much more hath God given us rest and perfect peace through the blood of the Lamb. And now he says, “Go ye, therefore, and preach the gospel to every creature; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end.” If my reader has not this “rest on every side,” then do not think to get it by preaching or doing; let me point thee to Him who gives it, even to Jesus. But if you have peace with God, then “set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God: ARISE, THEREFORE, AND BUILD.”

What a privilege to be a fellow-laborer with God. There is work for every mason, and every man who has found rest to his own soul. Some may be felling proud cedars, others striking with the stern ax of conviction down in the deep mine, others drawing with strong cords of love divine, and others fitting together the building.

Do not say, I can do nothing. “Is not the Lord your God with you?” “Arise, therefore, and build.”

God give us more willingness of heart, more singleness of eye, more simplicity of faith; and as the building grows in silent power, yea, when the top, stone shall be brought with shouting, to Him be all the praise.

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