

- ***READ Ephesians 2:11-22*** The letter to the Ephesians has been described by some as Paul's great essay on the church and God's expectations for her. This can be clearly seen even with the few verses that we read together just a moment ago. Within the text of **Ephesians 2:11-22**, Paul speaks of the church being a body made up of people of all backgrounds. Jews and Gentiles alike could be brought near by the blood of Christ, *"For he is our peace, who made both groups into one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility."* (v.14) Further, it is through Jesus that we have access in one Spirit to the Father. (v.18) It is through Jesus that we become *"fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household."* (v.19) All of this is *"built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone."* (v.20) It is on Him that the whole building or the body or the church is able to grow into a holy temple in the Lord. (v.21) It is in Jesus that we are *"being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit."* (v.22)
- I don't know about you, but it seems to me that Jesus kinda holds this whole thing together! Did you notice just how many things are made possible by and through Jesus? Nearly every verse in this section of Paul's letter ties directly into Jesus, and surely for this reason it is able to be said that He is the cornerstone of everything. He is to be our Lord, our Standard, and our King. Unfortunately, our modern practices in architecture hinder us from grasping these words with the same weight that Paul's original audience would be able to grasp them because our methodology of building structures isn't like theirs was. However, consider how one writer describes the importance of the cornerstone to ancient builders.
"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."
- Just as ancient buildings either stood or fell based upon their building upon a literal cornerstone, so do we stand or fall based upon whether or not Jesus is the Cornerstone of our faiths. This morning, I would like to illustrate how this is the case by considering what happens when Jesus is rejected as the chief cornerstone of our faiths in God. I believe that a rejection of Jesus as the Messiah of God and Cornerstone of our faiths will lead to a multitude of problems and complications within our faiths. Let's begin by looking at how men have fought Jesus as the Chief Cornerstone, and then we will get to the consequences of such a rejection.

I. Men have always fought to reject Jesus as God's chosen and appointed Messiah.

A. The people of Jesus's day were less than convinced of Jesus being God's Messiah.

1. Throughout the entire history of Israel as God's chosen people, they were well aware of the fact that there was to come a person who was a descendant of Abraham through whom all of the nations of the earth would be blessed. (**Genesis 12:3**) This expectation was further solidified throughout their history as God would reiterate His promises to various people, particularly as He reiterated to David that it would be through His lineage that an everlasting King would sit on His throne. *"Your house and kingdom will endure before Me forever, and your throne will be established forever."* (**II Samuel 7:16**) David and others lived with an expectation of a coming powerful and influential king that would rule God's people.
2. However, their expectations were not matched by what was found in Jesus. Instead of a visually impressive form, we read in **Isaiah 53:2** that Jesus was quite unimpressive because He was simply a regular guy. Instead of a power political influencer who was to reestablish the nation of Israel to world power, Jesus came onto the scene to establish a kingdom that was not of this world. (**John 18:36**) Jesus simply didn't fit the mold for what the people of Israel believed they

would be getting when the chosen Messiah of God arrived on the scene, and even orthodox Jews of today's world continue to hold to this belief. Ben Shapiro, an orthodox Jew, rejects Jesus as the Messiah of God because He did not restore Jesus to geopolitical power.

3. Unfortunately, Mr. Shapiro is only following in the footsteps of the people of Jesus's day because they continually took offense to Jesus's teachings which is why Jesus was so bold as to quote **Psalm 118:22** in the presence of the Jewish leaders in **Matthew 21:42ff** directly following the sharing of the parable of the wicked farmers. His sharing of this parable and quotation only led them to ramp up their efforts to permanently remove Jesus from the religious scene of their day.

B. Men continue to reject Jesus as God's Messiah.

1. Even after Jesus's death, we know that there were people who rejected Jesus during the first century. John writes in **I John 4:1-3**, *"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming; even now it is already in the world."*
2. The same type of antichrists continue to exist in the world in various forms. Those who are atheists will obviously reject the divinity of Jesus because they refuse to acknowledge the existence of the supernatural or divine. Even some of those who are religious reject Jesus as the divine Son of God. Members of the Church of Latter Day Saints believe that Jesus was a created being of heavenly Father, and those of the Islamic faith believe that Jesus was only a great prophet of God, but not divine as the Bible teaches that He is. Like the Jews of Jesus's day and even today, these groups have rejected Jesus as the chief cornerstone of their faiths, and the end result is that they also end up rejecting many other things.

II. When men reject Jesus as the Cornerstone...

A. They reject the Father.

1. While it was not uncommon for Jesus to speak in a round about way at times during His ministry, I am very thankful for those times when He was very straight forward with truths concerning Himself and His mission. For example, He was very straight forward when He spoke of His relationship to God the Father. In **John 14:6** Jesus states, *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you know Me, you will also know My Father. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him."* If the Jews became so angry to the point of murder that they were willing to kill Jesus for simply stating in **John 5:17**, *"My Father is still working, and I am working also."* then I couldn't imagine just how angry they would become if they heard Him say what He tells the Apostles there in **John 14:6**.
2. The connection between God the Father and Jesus His Son is simply inescapable. Further evidence of this can be seen in Jesus's prayer that He offers up in **John 17** and specifically **vv.1-5 & 20-23**. Even a very quick reading of these verses is enough to clearly understand that the Father and the Son are one in unity and purpose. If I desire to be in fellowship with the Father then I must first accept and follow the Son. My rejection of Jesus is a rejection of God.

B. We reject salvation.

1. The great sermon that was preached on Pentecost in **Acts 2** left the hearers without much question as to whether or not this Jesus whom they had crucified was the Son of God. Peter announced with great boldness and enthusiasm that it was Jesus of Nazareth whom God has made both Lord and Messiah. (**Acts 2:32-36**) It was in the name of this man, Jesus Christ, that these individuals were to repent and be baptized in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. This promise of salvation was made not just to these individuals but it has been made to all people of all times moving forward. (**Acts 2:38,39**)

2. This message was proclaimed on Pentecost, and it continued to be the message that was preached to all who might be seeking salvation from God. The Apostles were not shy about sharing this great message with any who might hear, and that was true even in the face of persecution. **Acts 4** finds Peter and John having been arrested for proclaiming Jesus being raised from the dead. They are brought before the rulers, elders, and scribes along with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other members of the priestly family. They questioned Peter and John as to why they were teaching what they were teaching and Peter doesn't beat around the bush at all. He proclaims that rejecting Jesus means rejecting salvation.

*"Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them, **'Rulers of the people and elders: If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a disabled man, by what means he was healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing here before you healthy. This Jesus is the stone rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.'**" (Acts 4:8-12)*

C. We reject the Apostle's authority,

1. The last recorded words that we have from Jesus to His Apostles found in the Gospel accounts is found in **Matthew 28:16-20**. Some of the Apostles seemed to have doubted as to whether or not Jesus was truly there with them, so He seeks to comfort their hearts for the work that He was preparing to charge them to go and do. He solidifies within their minds that He truly was Lord and that God had given Him all power in heaven and on earth. With that power, He expected for these men to go and teach the nations the Gospel and baptizing those who believed. They were to teach all of those everything that He Himself had taught them up to this point, and He assures them that He would be with them in the work they were doing for Him. In this text, Jesus is delegating His authority to them just as He said He would back in **Matthew 16:19**.
2. This was what Jesus had been preparing them for. He foretold of them being the men who would judge the coming kingdom on the earth. *"Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, in the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'"* (**Matthew 19:28**) If we reject the teachings and traditions handed down by the Apostles then we are rejecting the very teachings of Jesus Himself and there will be no salvation for us. (**II Thessalonians 2:13-15**)

D. We reject His church.

1. At the opening of the lesson, we noted the strong teachings of the letter to the Ephesians concerning the church. In that section of **Ephesians 2:19-22**, we noted that it is through Jesus that we are now *"fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the Cornerstone. In Him the whole building, being put together, goes into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit."*
2. If we want to be a part of that body that is being built together as the dwelling place for the Spirit of God (**I Corinthians 6:19,20 & I Corinthians 6:16-18**), then we must be sure that we are acknowledging Jesus as the one who purchased the church with the shedding of His blood. (**Acts 20:28**) If we reject Jesus as our Savior and Lord then there is no way for us to gain entry into the body that He died to save. He is the door which we must enter into if we want to be a part of His church. Rejecting Him means we reject His church.

E. We reject His resurrection.

1. Finally, Rejecting Jesus means that we reject the fact that He was raised from the death by the power of God. The preaching of Jesus being raised from the dead by the power of God was the

central message that was being preached in the beginning, and it was the issue by which Peter and John were arrested in **Acts 4**. The Jewish leadership did not want them spreading this message any further, so they *“ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.”* (**Acts 4:18**) Of course, this only intensified Peter and John’s zeal for the Lord for they said, *“Whether it’s right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”* (**Acts 4:19,20**)

2. They were unable to stop speaking about that which they had seen and heard because the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the lynch pin in all of the Christian faith. Paul makes it very clear that if Jesus was not truly raised from the dead then *“our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith...the dead are not raised...your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins...we should be pitied more than anyone.”* (**I Corinthians 15:12-19**) Our rejection of Jesus means rejecting His resurrection and the great power that it makes possible. We, in turn, reject our own spiritual resurrection in baptism and our physical resurrection in the last day.

III. Our faith stands and falls upon our acceptance of Jesus as the Christ, the divine Son of God.

A. Are we willing to genuinely consider the evidence of Jesus as God’s Son?

1. I truly believe these considerations to be extremely valuable because we have hopefully been impressed with the fact that whether or not Jesus is the Son of God matters a great deal to our faith. If we reject Him then we reject nearly every foundational point that holds our faith together.
2. Therefore, we would do well to truly consider the evidence that the Scriptures give us concerning Jesus. Are we willing to look at the numerous connections that the Gospel writers make between the coming of Jesus and the prophecies of the Old Testament? Are we willing to consider the incredible works of Jesus while He was here on the earth? Are we willing to consider the resurrection of Jesus and how it is the greatest evidence that Jesus was surely divine? Though our faith might be in those things that are unseen, it is those things that are seen in Scripture that establish our beliefs. Though we ourselves haven’t seen Jesus, we hold in our hands the human accounts of Him and His life here on earth.

B. If we find the evidence compelling, then we must only submit to Him as our Lord and Savior.

1. Our examinations will then lead us to a point of decision. If we reject the evidence for it not being convincing or insufficient then the result is that we are free to continue on in whatever way possible because it simply invalidates everything that the Scriptures are built upon. If we can’t stand upon Jesus as God then the legs have been cut right out from underneath the Scriptures, and it will be impossible for them to hold any weight in our eyes.
2. However, if we recognize the validity of the evidence, then we would do well to submit ourselves to the desires of Jesus. What He desires is for our salvation, and we can know this to be the case because of everything that He was willing to do in coming to earth to die for us, those who had rebelled and rejected His Father in the first place. We cannot have saving faith if it is not founded on the One whom God sent, Jesus Christ His one and only Son.

If we are willing to build our faith upon Jesus as the cornerstone then I have every confidence in the world that each and every one of us will be able to live strong lives of faith for our great God. However, if we reject Jesus then we can only build ourselves on the sand, and we know that great will be the fall of our faith when the day of storms undoubtably comes. He is our Rock and Cornerstone, may we only ever build our faith upon Him.