

Two Viewpoints on Cornerstones

Cornerstones in Masonic Writing and Cornerstones in Scripture

Masonic Thoughts on Cornerstones

Mackey's Symbolism of Freemasonry, Masonic History Co Chicago, Ill. 1945

Chapter XXIV Symbolism of the cornerstone pp. 158 – 175

The cornerstone is connected to the ritual of the first degree of Freemasonry. The candidate becomes the representative of a spiritual cornerstone, which must be perfectly square, as it is an emblem of morality or strict performance of every duty. Among the Greeks the square was a man of unsullied integrity.

The cube denotes truth. Mercury or Hermes is represented by a cubical stone and is a type of truth. The Northeast corner of a building or lodge is chosen because the East is a symbol of Masonry, “which professes to contain within its bosom the pure light of truth. The rising of the sun dispenses his illuminating and prolific rays...so in the moral world...it was from the ancient priesthood living in the East that those lessons of God of nature, and of humanity first emanated, which traveling Westward, revealed to man his future destiny and his dependence on a superior power.” The North is the most remote from the sun, and is a place of darkness, “symbolic of the profane world which has not yet been penetrated and illuminated by the intellectual rays of Masonic light.” Barbaric hordes came from North Europe and brought ignorance. The spiritual cornerstone in the Northeast corner of the lodge is symbolic of the neophyte or candidate who has just emerged from the profane world. He still has part of the imperfections of the North, but he is striving for light and truth. His allegiance is now divided. If he were wholly in the order as a Master Mason the East would have received him. One surface of the stone faces East, one North.

In Christ, the cornerstone, the Jews and Gentiles were joined. Others see Christ as between the Old and New Testament. The cornerstone should be of enduring material so it will always remain. It reminds the Freemason that when this earthly home of his tabernacle shall have passed away, he has within him ” ...a cornerstone of immortality, an emanation from that

Divine Spirit which pervades all nature, and which therefore, must survive the tomb and rise, triumphant and eternal, above the decaying dust of death and the grave.”

Romans also saw stones as permanently positioned. The stones represented statues of the god Terminus. So the student of Masonic symbolism is reminded by the cornerstone, by its form, its position and its permanence, of the significant doctrines of duty, virtue and religious truth, which is the great object of Freemasonry to teach. The stone is carefully examined by the constituted authorities of our Order with the necessary implements of operative labor, the square, the level, and the plumb...and declared to be “well-formed, true and trusty.” This teaches the Freemason that his virtues are to be tested. Freemasons must be tested by temptation, trials, suffering, and adversity before they can be pronounced, by the Master builder of souls, worthy of the spiritual building of eternal life, “as living stones, for that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Sacred elements of Masonic consecration produce a stone set apart by pouring corn, wine and oil upon its surface...”the corn of nourishment, the wine of refreshment and the oil of joy.” These are promised rewards of the faithful performance of duty as King David says, “Wine that makes us glad...oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the heart.” It helps Masons remember they are to feed the hungry, cheer the sorrowful and pour healing oil into wounds of fellow travelers. Corn is symbolic of resurrection, but Masonry uses acacia instead. Corn reminds us of temporal blessings of life and health. It also speaks of the merit to which we should strive with “clean hands and a pure heart.” Thus we erect, from the cornerstone of our initiation, a spiritual temple, which shall be adorned with the “beauty of holiness”. The wine reminds us of immortal refreshments where our labors are over in the celestial lodge, where the Grand Architect of the universe forever presides. Oil is a symbol of prosperity and happiness and joy, and it consecrates objects of religious worship. Hence we are reminded that the cultivation of virtue, the practice of duty, the resistance of temptation, and all those other graces, help us strive to fit our bodies as living stones. The spiritual building of eternal life must be consecrated by a holy obedience to God’s will and a firm reliance on God’s providence. This alone constitutes the chief cornerstone, the sure foundation in which any man can build with the reasonable hope of a prosperous issue in his work.

The cornerstone is peculiarly a Jewish symbol and has a Temple origin, referring to the expected Messiah. See Hasting’s Bible Dictionary “House.” Also see Brother George W. Speth, who speaks of a building symbolically consecrated by the sacrifice of a human being, the

ceremony being a foundation rite. The corn, wine, and oil are symbolic reminders of a sacrifice of once greater proportions. This has greater significance in the ritual of entered apprentice. The Knights Templars have an enlarged vision of the Savior as the cornerstone.

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(p. 179) Cornerstone “for Masonic symbolism, it signifies a true mason and therefore is the first character which the Apprentice is made to represent after his initiation has been completed. “

Albert Mackey Symbolism of Freemasonry, Cornerstone

...an emblem of morality or strict performance of every duty
...symbolic of the candidate who has just emerged from the profane world...
...from the cornerstone of our initiation we erect a spiritual temple..

Bible verses on Cornerstones

Isaiah 28:16 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.

Isaiah 8: 13-14 The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, and he will be a sanctuary, but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.

Psalms 118: 22 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Daniel 2: 44-45 In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands, a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay and the silver and the gold to pieces.

Matthew 21 :42, Mark 12: 10-11 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Luke 20:17-18 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,. Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.

Acts 4:10-12 Jesus Christ of Nazareth....he is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

1 Cor. 1:23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

Ephesians 2:19-20 you are...fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

1 Peter 2:4 As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him, 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.

1 Peter 2:7 See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. And a stone that cause men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.