

PETER: A HEARING STONE

Out of the multitudes of those who followed him, the Master selected 12, “to be with him,” to be “sent forth to preach” (*Mark 3:14*). They were also to learn certain principles (*Is 8:16; Mark 4:11*) to do with the Mystery later to be revealed to the nations through them (*Rom 16:25,26; Eph 3:4,5*), and to be witnesses of certain events, by way of preparation for their later work in declaring the Gospel to the ends of the Roman Habitable (*Rom 10:18*). But we are not to suppose that the selection of these men was an arbitrary affair based upon personal preferences, and natural affections - as is the case of other men who choose companions and fellow-labourers. Nay, the Master spent all night in preparatory prayer prior to the day of selection: “it came to pass in those days, that *he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer unto God*. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles ...” (*Luke 6:11,12*).

DIVINE SELECTION THROUGH PRAYER

Bro Robert Roberts spoke of this:

“Jesus had just enjoined his disciples to pray to “the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest;” and here we have him engaged “all night in prayer to God” just before performing the most important operation in connection with that work—namely, the appointment of twelve special men who were to take the leading part in the planting of the gospel in the earth, and who, with one exception, were to rank next to him in the glory of the kingdom of Israel restored (*Luke 22:29,30; Acts 1:6; Jno 13:18,21*). Our estimate of the greatness of Christ may interfere somewhat with our appreciation of his dependence upon prayer. This is because of our inability to reach to the greater greatness above him, even the Father, of whom he said, “My Father is greater than I” (*Jno 14:28*). Jesus “knew what was in man,” and “needed not that any should testify what was in man” (*Jno 2:25*). Therefore, we are liable to conclude that he needed not to pray the Father to guide him in the selection of men for companionship in sufferings and glory. We may learn the blindness of such a thought as we behold him retire to a mountain solitude during the darkness of night to pray all night to God.”

(Nazareth Revisited).

Indeed, communion through prayer was essential for the choosing itself was to be of the Father - Yahweh chose the men, and gave them to His Son. That is the Master’s own testimony, for in a later prayer he spake before his Father: “*Thine thy were, and Thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word ... While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scriptures might be fulfilled*” (*Jno 17:6,12*). So it is then, that up a mountain in the darkness of the night, we find the Son praying to his Father that he might be given labourers to go forth “into his harvest,” that the selection of those labourers would indeed be of Yahweh’s choosing; men selected for the purpose of being with His Son.

THE SELECTION OF A FEW

It would appear that whilst the Lord Jesus Christ was upon the top of the mountain during his night of prayer, the disciples had assembled themselves further down; for upon breaking of the dawn, many of them were called up further to appear before him (*Mark 3:13*). And then, out of the many who had been called, a few were chosen, having been found suitable for the Master’s use. Their names were called out, and they stepped forward one by one out of the crowd.

Some of them were also given new names. First Simon was selected (*Mat 10:2*), who “he surnamed Peter” (*Mark 3:16*) in the presence of them all; and then the others: “James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and He surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The Sons of Thunder: and Andrew, and Phillip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him: and they went into a house” (*Mark 3:17-19*).

Peter, was selected first. He stands out as the “first” quite significantly in the record; he was the first called, the first to openly confess the identity of the Son of the Living El (*Mat 16:16*), so often the first of the Disciples to speak on a variety of occasions as we shall see, and the first to enter into the Sepulchre to behold the grave clothes of the risen Christ (*Jno 20:4-6*). It was only appropriate then, that he was the first of the Apostles given to Christ by the Father.

A CHANGE OF NAME

The change of Simon’s name to Peter at the time of his selection, was the fulfilment of Christ’s earlier words to Peter, spoken at the time of their first meeting. Simon was introduced to the Master by Andrew, his younger brother, and a disciple of John the Baptist (*Jno 1:37,40*). He found Simon, “and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, *Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas*, which is by interpretation, A Stone” (*Jno 1:41,42*).

But notice the words of Christ here; he was already called Simon; “thou *art* Simon,” but would at some point *in the future* (i.e. the time of his calling to be one of The Twelve), he would be called Cephas (the Aramaic form of Peter, by which he has become familiarly known); “thou shalt be called Cephas.” The reason for this becomes evident when we consider the meaning of each of these names:

SIMON - A MAN OF HEARING

The name “Simon,” or “Simeon” signifies *to hear; hearing*. That this is so can be demonstrated from the words of Rachel, giving her reason for calling one of her sons by this name: “she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because Yahweh *hath heard* that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: *and she called his name Simeon*” (*Gen 29:33*). Simeon, or *hearing* is a most appropriate name for the first of Christ’s apostles, for the most pre-eminent characteristic required of a disciple, is the ability to listen, or hear. “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (*Rom 10:17*), so that a man of faith, is a man taught by the Word to *hear* the counsel of the Spirit. Peter was indeed such a man; immediately upon *hearing* the words of his brother Andrew, he went to see the Master. And later, after *hearing* the words of Christ, he forsook all and followed him.

But although he were already a man of “hearing”, Simon was not yet Cephas, or Peter, *a stone*. The type of Stone that Simon was to become is in the Greek, *Petros*, which signifies a *piece* of stone, derived from a greater mass of Rock. So says WE Vine, in his *Expository dictionary of New Testament Words*: “*Petros* denotes a piece of a rock, a detached stone or boulder, in contrast to *petra*, a mass of rock”. This is the name which was appended to Simon, (notice, he was “surnamed” Peter, rather than having his name replaced altogether; the stone-characteristic was to be in addition to, not instead of being a man of hearing). Whilst this man was already a *hearer*, by the time of his final selection to be one of the twelve, he would become a *hearing stone*.

SETTING UP STONES

The use of *Stone* in Scripture is quite varied, but aside from its use as a building material, there is another usage of boulders, or detached stones, in Scripture which is most significant to our

present considerations. Stones were often used as memorials, standing as witnesses to significant events, or agreements*. Thus, Jacob set up a stone as a Pillar (*Gen 28:28,22*), at the place where Yahweh appeared to him. Later, he set up a stone, with a heap of stones to be a “witness” of the covenant made with Laban, that neither would do the other any harm. Joshua set up stones to memorialise the crossing of Jordan (*Josh 4*), and Samuel set up a stone to bare witness of Yahweh’s help to his people in defeating the Philistines (*1Sam 7:12*).

But another occasion which is of particular interest, is the setting up of a Stone by Joshua just before his death, which was to stand as a reminder to Israel of the covenant made with their *elohim*, that they might not go a whoring after idols:

“Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of *elohim*, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of Yahweh. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, **this stone shall be a witness** unto us; **for it hath heard** all the words of Yahweh which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, **lest ye deny** your *elohim* ... and it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Num, the servant of Yahweh died, being an hundred and ten years old.” (*Josh 24:25-29*).

Like Peter then, this stone was to be a *hearing stone*. Being in the presence of all when certain words were uttered by Yahweh through Joshua, it is said to have figuratively “heard” those words. It was one of two reminders of the words spoken; the firstly being the written record “in the book of the law of Elohim” which Joshua himself wrote, and the Stone being set up as a reminder that things of great importance had been spoken - so that the people could then go to the book, and read what they were. This meant that, even after Joshua’s death, the people would not forget what had been spoken at that place; the words that came through him could not be forgotten for as long as the Pillar remained.

THE ROLE OF PETER’S EPISTLE

And how significant these things become, when we compare them with the last words of Peter, Christ’s *hearing-stone*, just before the time of his death! His words were to perform a similar function; to be a reminder after his decease, of previous things:

“I will not be negligent *to put you always in remembrance* of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by *putting you in remembrance*, knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were *eyewitnesses* of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory ... and **this voice** which came from heaven **we heard**, when we were with him in the holy mount” (*2 Pet 1:12-18*).

This was the second time Peter was up a mountain with the Master; the first being at the time of his selection. But upon the mount of Transfiguration, Peter *heard* the words spoken by Yahweh concerning His Son; he was an *eyewitness* to what had taken place, and immediately prior to his death, he set these things to paper, under direction of the Spirit, leaving a reminder of what had been performed. He was present throughout of the ministry of the Greater Joshua, hearing the words of the Eternal Spirit spoken through him, and bore witness of those things, seeking to

stir up those who would hear, into remembrance of them. He could not be a memorial Stone prior to being chosen to be with Christ, as there was nothing to be a witness to; but once he was chosen by Christ, he *listened*, to later bear witness to those things, being (as we shall see later in our series, if Yahweh wills), an apostle sent to the Gentiles for that purpose.

STONES REMINDED OF THEIR ORIGINS

We saw that the type of stone Simon was to become, was a *petros*, a stone *taken out from a greater mass*. And in this regard, the testimony of Isaiah is most relevant, in speaking of period immediately prior to the devastation of AD 70. The Prophet spoke of the testimony that would be uttered to that generation:

“Hearken unto me, ye that follow righteousness, ye that seek Yahweh: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him” (*Is 51:1,2*).

Here, the people of the land were exhorted to consider themselves to be but stones, culled out from a greater whole; derived from Abraham and Sarah - but ultimately from Yahweh, the Rock of Israel (*2 Sam 23:3*). Abraham was the source from whence they were derived; they were taken out from him; and the exhortation went forth to those Stones to “hearken”, or hear to the prophetic utterance, and consider the character of their father. And that utterance again took the form of a *reminder*; of things already known to them, that Yahweh took him alone, blessing and increasing him for the faith that he manifested through works of obedience.

These words that came through Isaiah were prophetic of the words that were to come through Christ and his Apostles to the generation immediately prior to AD 70, exhorting the people to repentance - and Peter, himself a Hearing Stone, culled from the Abrahamic Rock, was involved in the preaching of those things. We can be sure of this, for the Spirit through Peter actually quotes this passage in application to the judgements which were to come upon such a generation:

“Hearken unto Me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation ... lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like a smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever” (*Is 51:6, see 2Pet 3:10-13*).

A time of terrible judgments was to come, wherein the Jewish political Heavens and Earth were to be removed out of their place. Though the people were stones hewn out for the purpose of witnessing to the righteousness of Yahweh, they were not *hearing* stones. In these matters, Peter stands as a Stone set up by the Greater Joshua, a monument to the righteousness of Yahweh, and himself a wonderful example of faith and hearing.

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