

THE CRITICAL PLACEMENT OF A CORNERSTONE

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The cornerstone: The first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation. As the first stone laid, it becomes the reference point for all other stones laid subsequent to it. Everything finds its definition in this one piece – the cornerstone (See 1 Peter 2:7).

THE PLACEMENT OF THE CORNERSTONE DETERMINES THE PLACEMENT OF ALL THE STONES TO FOLLOW.

Nothing is more critical in doctrinal architecture than the chosen point of its cornerstone. Why? Because all structural additions of teachings must find their alignment with their cornerstone. In other words, any formulation of understanding must be aligned with the cornerstone, or it must be rejected.

Not only is there a necessity of *having* a cornerstone, but the *placement* of that cornerstone is also critical.

HOW OUR PERSPECTIVE IS AFFECTED BY THE SET OF THE CORNERSTONE.

How we understand one thing in a particular subject usually determines how we relate to other things which we encounter in the same subject matter. An example of this is illustrated in the history of man's understanding of his universe. Once, it was believed, by certain notable men, that the earth was the center of the universe. This cornerstone belief was not just a belief of the then scientific world but was very much one that was proclaimed to be Biblical by authorities of religion who used such scriptures as Gen 1:14-18, Ps 104:5, Job 26:7, and Is 40:22 as proof texts.

To this day, we still use the terms “sun rise” and “sun set” – even though we now know that the sun neither rises nor sets in relation to the earth, but that the earth's orbit about the sun causes the effect because we live in a heliocentric universe. While the earth may well be the center of the Biblical universe (regarding its status to mankind), it, however, is not the geometrical center of the universe.

When the religious authorities were countered by an astronomer who declared that the earth was not the center of the universe, but the sun was, on February 13, 1633, Italian philosopher, astronomer, and mathematician Galileo Galilei arrived in Rome to face charges of heresy for advocating the Copernican theory, which holds that the Earth revolves around the Sun.

Galileo officially faced the Roman Inquisition in April of that same year and agreed to plead guilty in exchange for a lighter sentence. Put under house arrest indefinitely by Pope Urban VIII, Galileo spent the rest of his days at his villa in Arcetri, near Florence, before dying on January 8, 1642.

Thus, the incorrect setting of the cornerstone by those religious authorities caused them to reject the truth that Galileo presented them. Why? Because Galileo's "truth" did not align itself with their "truth."

This same scenario was also witnessed when popular belief supported a "flat earth." Ancient maps show us today how an incorrectly placed cornerstone causes all that follows to be just as incorrect – "beyond here be dragons!"

ALL DOCTRINES HAVE A CORNERSTONE.

All doctrines have a cornerstone; however, the question of the correctness of the doctrines depends solely on WHERE the cornerstone is set. Once a cornerstone's location is established, by firmly setting it in place, EVERYTHING following that point of placement must be made to align with it. Therefore, if the cornerstone is set incorrectly, all subsequent additions will also be incorrect. Likewise, a correct placement of a cornerstone, by virtue, decides the validity of the rest of the additions. The placement of the cornerstone is the determining factor in what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in the construction of a doctrine.

This principle of an errantly placed cornerstone can be witnessed among false teachings. A place was chosen incorrectly (even if it is from Biblical references), and that choosing determined WHAT could and could not be placed adjacent to it; therefore, if a correcting truth were to challenge the miss-set cornerstone of the errant doctrine, it would automatically be rejected, simply, because it "didn't fit."

Therein lies the dilemma of an incorrectly placed cornerstone: Truth cannot realign it because it presents a defensive to any placement which is not its own – the cornerstone actually becomes a stumbling block.

The placement of a cornerstone on the phrase “accept the Lord as your personal Savior” – a phrase, by the way, that is nowhere rehearsed nor ascribed to in the Bible – is a cornerstone incorrectly placed. When this badly placed cornerstone is challenged with Biblical proof texts which plainly show a remedy for the remission of sin (and how can salvation be affected without dealing with sin?), yet because Acts 2:38 counters this ill-placed cornerstone, it is dismissed because it doesn’t align with “accept the Lord as your personal Savior” cornerstone.

The doctrine of the trinity is yet another ill-chosen placement of a cornerstone. Again, the term “trinity” is not a Biblical term. This doctrine which ignores the declaration of God Himself when He affirms that there is only one God and His Name one. The cornerstone, in this instance, becomes the cause of spiritual blindness because it rejects light!

Take also, for instance, the case of Calvin, who overreacted to the works-oriented salvation of the Catholic Church. No doubt the Catholic Church, then and now, teaches that works save us. John Calvin was disgusted with man’s attempt to secure his salvation with good works. So his teachings swung the pendulum to the other extreme, where man had “nothing” to do with his salvation—not even “faith” was man’s responsibility. Calvin taught that faith was something that God sovereignly gave to those He elected to be saved or withheld from those chosen to be lost.

As Calvin’s TULIP doctrine (as it later became known) congealed over time, it so opposed the Catholic doctrine of “good works” that it eventually ended up with man being only a pawn on the great board of life only to be maneuvered by an outside force wherein man had no part whatsoever, in any way, of his own salvation. Man was either “elected” to be saved or reversely “elected” to be damned. Calvin, by setting a cornerstone incorrectly, produced a dangerous doctrine of personal predestination – a doctrine which, in the end, makes Calvary unessential.

These few but impactful examples clearly illustrate how critical is the placement of a cornerstone – so critical, in fact, that the Scripture’s warning ought to give us pause in our profession of faith – making certain that we truly place line upon line and precept upon precept in rightly dividing the Truth. Line upon line and precept upon precept simply means that it ensures that it all fits – a workman that need not be ashamed!

A NAIL IN A SURE PLACE.

An old carpenter’s saying is, “measure twice, cut once,” reminds of the necessity of precision. A properly placed Biblical cornerstone will ensure the success of our preaching and teaching – saving ourselves and them that hear us.

Isaiah 22:23

And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house.

A sure place is a safe place!

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