

Three "I Wills" of Jesus

"I will build my church" (Mt. 16:18). "I will send him (the Holy Spirit) unto you" (John 16:7). "I will come again" (John 14:3). These three pronouncements of Jesus concerning what He would do, form the basis for our message this month. The three are closely related and form a "trinity" which cannot be separated as far as the Lord's purpose for this age is concerned.

What did Jesus mean when He said "I will build my church?" Ordinarily when Christians read this statement they think only in terms of the Lord's purpose in evangelism and multiplying converts during the course of this age. But something more than this was envisioned by Jesus when He declared His purpose to build. Let me illustrate. Supposing you were going to build a house out of stones. First you would have to gather the stones, but this would only be preliminary to the actual building. Evangelism corresponds to the gathering of the stones. But a pile of stones is not a building. When Jesus said He would BUILD His church, He used the Greek word oikodo-meo, which means "to Build" as you would build a house or a building. Stones must be cut and shaped and fit together, each in its own place, before it can be said that something has been "built".

Before we proceed with the above thought, we find that in the book of Acts, whenever the church is pictured as evangelizing (gathering stones), the word "build" is not used, but rather the word "multiply". Note Acts 6:1, where it speaks of the number of the disciples being "multiplied". "Multiplying is NOT "Building", though it is a necessary preliminary. You must have material before you can build a house. In Acts 9:31 we have both the thoughts of multiplying and building presented together. "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified (built up); and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Obviously there must be some people before the Lord can start building. But you will notice in the above scripture that the church was able to multiply because it was built up in the Lord. If our emphasis is on just multiplying, we will eventually end in confusion. But if God has given us some people, and we will concentrate on building (spiritual edifying) and letting Him build us together as His spiritual house or temple, then we will also multiply, in God's time. Whenever you come across this word "edify" in the King James New Testament it means "to build up", or to "build together".

Jesus is the builder, but He is also a part of the building. And the same is true of us. We are co-laborers with Him, but we are also a part of the building (see 1 Cor. 3:9). Let us take a closer look at Jesus' words in Mt. 16:17-18 to see this. Jesus speaks to Simon, whom He renamed Peter, and says "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona." Simon means "hearing", and Barjona means "son of a dove". Once we are willing to hear (Simon) what the Lord is saying as He speaks to us through the Holy Spirit, then we are fulfilling the "son of a dove" meaning of Barjona, for the Holy Spirit is pictured as a dove in the Scriptures. Then we can become "Peter" which means "a stone", and as "living stones" the Lord can build us (shape us) and build us together in His spiritual house (see 1 Pet. 2:5). The name "Peter" is a translation of the Greek word petros, which means a moveable stone or rock. But when Jesus uses the word "rock" in Mt. 16:18, declaring that "upon this rock I will build my church", He used the Greek word petra which means a massive bed-rock. So it is obvious that Jesus was not talking about building on Peter because He used an entirely different Greek word. Jesus declared He would build upon the massive bed-rock, the unmoveable rock of the confession which Peter made: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16). But Peter would be a "petros"; a "living stone" which would be a part of the spiritual "house" which Jesus would build.

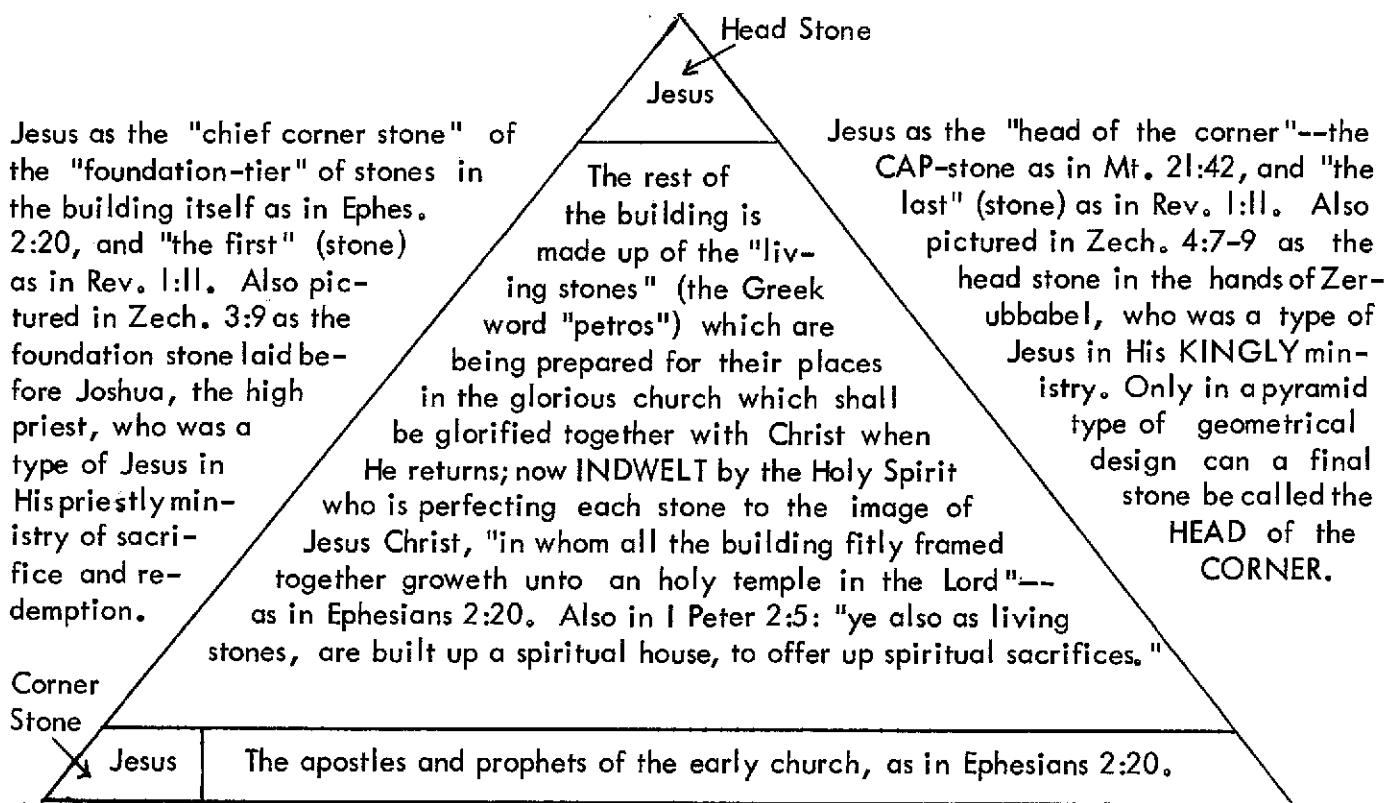
Jesus spoke of the wise man who built his house on the rock (Mt. 7:24). The Greek word in this passage is the same "petra" as we saw in Mt. 16:18--a massive bed-rock in contrast to a moveable stone. Certainly Jesus was showing the importance of each of us building upon the rock of divinely revealed truth, which HE IS (John 14:16), for in the Greek it says "THE rock" rather than "a rock" as in the King James version. But also from a different perspective we can say that Jesus HIMSELF is the "wise man" who is building HIS house (church) upon the rock, and what HE builds, as well as what we build as co-laborers with Him, will STAND in the coming storm of tribulation (Mt. 7:25). But what is not built BY Christ, and ON CHRIST, but on the "sand" of Matt. 7:26, simply will not stand; it will collapse in the time of testing (storm).

To help us understand just how Jesus is building, I will illustrate by designating certain "roles" to all that are involved in the building process. I will call Jesus the Master-architect and supervisor. I will say that the Holy Spirit is the general contractor. The Holy Spirit was SENT by Jesus as His personal agent or representative to do a certain WORK--to ACT on His behalf. The second of the "trinity" of "I will's" of Jesus which we are dealing with in this article is "I will send the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is indispensable to the building process. Remember that as "living stones" in the building, each one of us must be CHANGED (shaped and prepared for the particular spot the Lord has for us in His glorious temple) and that means all the "rough edges" of the SELF-life have to be removed, and our "rough unhewn nature" inherited through the fall must be transformed and shaped into the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29). This is an INSIDE job, and only the Holy Spirit who dwells WITHIN us can do his work of re-shaping and moulding--building INTO our very soul-structure the qualities (or "fruits"--Gal. 5:22), that prepare us for our place in His glorious house or temple. Thus Jesus' declaration, "I will send the Spirit" is an integral part of His declared purpose to "build His church."

To continue our illustration, I will liken the gift-ministries of Ephes. 4:11 to the sub-contractors. When building a house in the natural, there are building (carpentry), electrical, plumbing, roofing, etc., contractors; each with a specific responsibility to fulfill. Even so Jesus gave to the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, that the church might be built and brought to perfection (a finished product)--Ephes. 4:12-13. No ministry can do the whole job; each is dependent upon the others, for we are each limited in the areas of "building" that God is accomplishing through us. Finally, every Christian is helping to build as a co-laborer with Christ (1 Cor. 3:9); perhaps in the sight of God as either an apprentice or as a journeyman in his or her ability to help "build up" or edify others in the church.

In terms of the metaphor of "building" which we are considering, we now need to take a look at Jesus' third statement: "I will come again." WHY and WHEN does Jesus return? Surely we would not expect Him to return to an unfinished building. When He said "I will build my church", He had a definite goal in mind of a finished "living temple" of "living stones". We have already seen that Jesus was not speaking about just converting a certain amount of people, but of perfecting and building together the living stones who have become His own. Only He knows when the building process has been completed in each one who is to be a part of that glorious and glorified temple, and He will not return until the work is finished.

We need also to see that Jesus Himself is to be the FINAL STONE of this living temple. Jesus declares in Rev. 1:11 that He is "the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." What does this mean? In relation to our subject, it means that Jesus was the first stone (the chief corner stone of the foundation--Ephes. 2:20), and He is to be the last stone (the "head of the corner"--Mt. 21:42), which is the CAP stone. Let me illustrate with the drawing on the following page.



Jesus as "the ROCK"--the rock foundation UNDER the building (the Greek word "petra"). The massive "bed-rock" of divinely revealed TRUTH upon which the church is built, as in Mt. 7:24, 16:18, John 14:6, and 1 Cor. 3:11. "Son of God" and "son of man" (Mt. 16:13, 16).

Again, we need to see that Jesus comes to be the final stone of this completed building only when in His sight each stone to be in that glorious temple has been prepared and fitted into its proper place. If we are not letting Him build His church, and not letting Him build IN us what He wants, and not letting Him build us together, then we are hindering His coming. God cannot do the completed work He wants to do in each one of us except in relation to other Christians (stones). Paul says that we are "builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephes. 2:22). An individual stone is not a building. Neither is a pile of stones a building. There must be a right relationship established between the stones as the builder fits each in its proper place according to his design and purpose; then a building comes into being. Now is the time to let the Lord rightly relate us to those of His choosing in submission, love and mutual ministry, so that the time may soon come when the Holy Spirit will be released to FILL this living temple with the FULNESS of the glory of God (Ephes. 3:17-19).

In the pattern that God gave in the O.T., we see that Moses built the Tabernacle in the wilderness exactly as God told him to, and Moses is a type of Christ who is now building His church. Read in Exodus, chap. 40 the account of how Moses saw that everything was "reared up" in its proper place and order. Then it says in 40:33, "So Moses finished the work." Remember that in relation to His church, Jesus is the author AND finisher (Heb. 12:2). After Moses finished the work, we read in 40:34, "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord FILLED the tabernacle." Beloved, THINK NOT that this dispensation is going to end without Jesus fulfilling the pattern and FILLING the church, His living temple, with the FULNESS of HIS GLORY, that their might be a witness of His love and power such as the world has never

seen.. Then will the church receive the Spirit "without measure" even as Jesus did when He was on this earth (John 3:34). We rejoice in the measure of the glory and presence of the Spirit which we are now experiencing, but we have not yet seen the full glory come, and this means that in God's sight the building process is still going on, and the Lord is still preparing us.

Let me further illustrate this principle of building the temple with the symbolism of the foundation stone and the head stone from the book of Zechariah. Zechariah was one of the prophets of God who encouraged the people in the re-building of the temple after the remnant of the Jews had returned from Babylon. In Zech 3:9 we read of a stone that was set before Joshua the High Priest. Since it was "set" before Joshua it would speak of a foundation stone. Also Joshua was a TYPE of Jesus in his FIRST coming when He began to fulfill the priestly office by OFFERING HIMSELF as the perfect sacrifice for sin. This is indicated in the last statement of 3:9, "and I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day" (the day He was crucified). In His first coming Jesus became the foundation stone of God's NEW spiritual house, pictured by the stone set before Joshua. Then in Zech. 4:7 we read of another stone. This one is the HEAD stone in the hands of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the governor at that time, but also a prince of the House of David, the kingly line. He is a TYPE of Jesus in His kingly office and function. Although Jesus is now a king-priest after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 7:1-2), He has not fully exercised His kingly powers, but will do so when He comes again. THEN He will also fulfill the type of Zerubbabel who brings forth "the HEAD stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it" (Zech. 4:7).

We see in the preceding illustration how that one man cannot be a perfect TYPE of Jesus Christ. Thus we have both Joshua and Zerubbabel, priest and king, the "two anointed ones, that stand before the Lord of the whole earth" (Zech 4:14), portraying the Lord in His first and second comings; also the stones portraying Jesus as both the foundation stone and final stone. Note that the "seven eyes" which are pictured as being on the stone in Zech. 3:9 are also seen by John on the LAMB in Rev. 5:6, showing they both symbolize Christ. In Rev. 5:6 the eyes are "the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth," and in Zech. 4:10 they are called "the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth." My personal conviction is that they represent the seven arch-angels, but this is another subject which I cannot go into now.

I want now to consider the question of just HOW we are builders together with the Lord, and what are the materials with which we build. Immediately following Jesus' declaration that He would build His church, there is an important statement that bears on this subject. It is given in Mt. 16:19 as follows: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven:and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." In ancient times when Kings ruled in their Kingdoms, KEYS were given by the King to trusted stewards who had access to the royal treasury or storehouses. Thus we read in Isa. 22:20-22 of Eliakim who was the servant (steward) of the Kingdom at that time under the King of David's royal line, and God says of this trusted steward, "And the KEY of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." (Compare this with Rev. 3:7). I believe that the "keys" promised by Jesus in Mt. 16:19 are primarily keys of understanding and knowledge of the provisions, purposes, and ways of the Lord which open to us the "riches of His grace" and the "riches of His glory" (Ephes. 1:7, 3:16). Concerning the stewards of His day who were supposed to be opening to the people the truths of the "unsearchable riches of Christ", Jesus said, "Woe unto you, lawyers (teachers of the law)! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."

In Mt. 18:19 the Greek word translated "bind" is deo, which means "to bind, knit, tie, or wind," indicating that which is "binding" or necessary when used in a figurative sense, and this relates to what is required in our understanding and actions when we are BUILDING with the Lord. The Greek word translated "loose" is luo and it means "to loosen, break up, destroy, dissolve, or melt." Thus it can be used in the sense of breaking up or tearing down something, which would then be LOST. In light of the truth of BUILDING which we have been considering, I would like to translate this verse as follows: "Whatsoever thou shalt BUILD on earth shall be BUILT in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt LOSE on earth shall be LOST for heaven." In other words, we are either BUILDING that which will carry over into heaven, or we are engaging in that kind of thinking and acting which tears down and destroys and will result in a LOSS for us as far as the future and our heavenly reward is concerned. I don't want to imply that this is the only application of this verse, but it is a facet of truth that we need to see. It is confirmed by what Paul says in I Cor. 3:10-14 about building with either "wood, hay, stubble, or gold, silver, and precious stones." The "wood, hay and stubble" shall be burned up and thus LOST, but the "gold, silver, and precious stones" will LAST and carry over into heaven. God has placed us here to BUILD, and our future destiny, reward, placement in the kingdom, usefulness, and degree of blessedness and glory depends on how well we build. Some Christians will suffer GREAT LOSS, because of their failure to build correctly, but will be saved "as by fire" (I Cor. 3:15).

When Jesus said He would "build" His church, the Greek word He used is oikodomeo, and it is translated in the New Testament as "build, builded, builders, building, built, edified, edifieth, edified, edify, edifying, edification, and built up." Thus you can see that whenever you see the words translated in the King James version "edify", etc., that it means to build or build up. I want to list briefly the things given in the New Testament which God tells us are necessary in order for us to be builders, and which will help build into our lives that which God wants, and thus contribute to the building of the church. In each of the following things listed, the Greek word oikodomeo is used to indicate that which builds up or edifies the church.

1. Faith builds: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." (Jude 20). In contrast, doubt, fear, unbelief, etc., tear down and destroy.
2. The Word of God builds: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up." (Acts 20:32). See also Mt. 7:24-27.
3. Love builds: "knowledge puffeth up, but charity (love) edifieth (builds up)." (I Cor. 8:1). "And above all things put on charity (love), which is the bond (uniting, building factor, like mortar, which holds together) of perfectness (completeness or maturity). (Col. 3:14).
4. Right speech builds: "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." (Ephes. 4:29). "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt." (Col. 4:6).
5. Right attitudes build: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. . . let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification." (Rom. 14:19, 15:2). See the Beattitudes of Mt. 5:3-12.
6. Greater depth in Christ builds: "Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith." (Col. 2:7). The "work of God" is to believe INTO Jesus Christ (see John 6:29, where the King James uses the word "in", but the literal translation of the Greek word eis is "into").
7. God-ordained ministry builds: "And are 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 growtheth into an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephes. 2:20-22). "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work

of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Ephes. 4:11-12).

8. The ministry of each member builds: "What is it then, brethren? When ye come together, each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." (1 Cor. 14:26). ". . . from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love."

9. Gifts of the Spirit build up: "he that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. . . greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. . . So also ye, since ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that he may abound unto the edifying of the church. . . he that prophesieth speaketh unto men edification, and exhortation, and consolation." (1 Cor. 14:3-5, 12).

10. Spiritual sacrifices edify: ". . . ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:5). "Through him then let us offer a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Heb. 13:15-16).

Beloved, I hope that in this short article you have seen the importance of Jesus statements: "I will build My church", "I will send the Holy Spirit", and "I will come again"; and also how they form a "trinity" which cannot be separated in terms of God's purpose for this age. I also hope that you have seen the importance of seeing yourself as a "living stone" in the glorious temple He is building, and of "building together" with Him. Surely we are nearing the time when Jesus will come again, but note the prophetic words in Psalm 102:13-14, 16: "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her, yea the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. . . When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." Does this not indicate that the Lord has a "building" work to do in His people (Zion) BEFORE He appears in His glory? Only then can He return to be the CAP-stone of His glorious church or temple, and also glorify it with His own glory.

The temple that Solomon built is a type of the glorious church of "living stones." Solomon is also a type of the new age which is now dawning. David who preceded him is a type of the present age of preparation. Note that before the temple could be built by Solomon, David had to make extensive preparation. We read in 1 Chron. 22:1, 5: "And David said, 'Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death. . . and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God.' Then we read in 1 Kings 6:7 that the preparation was so complete that "the house (temple), when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither; so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building." HALLELUAH! Are you being MADE READY ahead of time that you might fit into the place God has chosen for you?

Remember, "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." (Psalm 127:1). Even so, "BUILD Lord Jesus"! And then "COME Lord Jesus"!

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