

## The White Stone

Text: Revelation 2:12-17

Key verse: Revelation 2:17: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

God speaks through stones. When the Lord Jesus made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, people cried out in Luke 19:38, "Saying, Blessed *be* the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." The Pharisees demanded that Christ rebuke those attributing praise to Him. Luke 19:40, however, informs us, "And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Christ was saying that if living persons will not give Him praise, the inanimate objects would speak the truth declaring who Christ is!

When our Lord died upon the cross the Bible says in Matt. 27:50, 51, "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent." Even the rocks were more sensitive to redemption than some of the hardened hearts of those mocking our Lord as He died!

After Moses struck the rock and out came water, he was commanded to only speak to the rock. In reference to this phenomenon Paul said in I Corinthians 10:4, "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." David defeated Israel's most infamous representative of evil embodied in Goliath as recorded in I Samuel 17:49, "And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang *it*, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth." An even greater enemy was defeated as signified by another stone as recorded in Mark 16:4: "And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great."

Yes, God has and can still speak to us through stones. There must be a powerful message in these words, "...To him that overcometh will I give...a white stone...." In the days of the Bible, how and in what manner was a white stone used to communicate?

### **I. THE WHITE STONE COULD HAVE BEEN USED TO COMMUNICATE AFFIRMATION.**

We cannot be sure, but it has been suggested that a white stone was one half of the Urim and Thummim, the other stone being black. As the Israelis sought direction, they consulted the Urim and Thummim located in the folds of the high priest's ephod (I Samuel 30:7, 8). It is believed that "yes" was reflected in the illumination of the white stone.

During the times of great persecution in the early church, it might have been a way that Christ was communicating, "Yes! I hear and answer prayer! Yes, you have access to the throne of grace! Yes! I am with you through these most trying days, even in death's door itself!" Perhaps the white stone was that great

confirmation as spoken of in II Corinthians 1:20, "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

## **II. THE WHITE STONE WAS USED TO MAKE A STATEMENT OF ACQUITTAL.**

In the ancient Roman days, if arrested a person was often presumed guilty until proven innocent. There was a system of branding one who had been incarcerated, so in the event of escaping, he could easily be identified. During trials the black stone stood for "guilty" whereas the white stone represented "not guilty." If the number of white stones representing the vote of each individual jury member outnumbered the black stones, the prisoner would go free, but not without a gift from the judge, which was a white stone with the identifying mark of the judge. If questioned about your innocence, all you would need to do is present the white stone representing your innocence. As a result, kindness proffered to you would be considered a favor to Rome.

It would be easy for one of these early followers of Christ to heap blame upon oneself for the persecutions. This may have been one way our Lord was telling His faithful followers that this suffering was for the glory of God, not in punitive action (II Timothy 3:12; John 9:1-3).

## **III. THE WHITE STONE WAS GIVEN TO A SLAVE WHO OBTAINED FREEDOM.**

Romans 6:22 declares, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." In truth, Paul told those in human bondage not to worry, because in the Lord they are free, having been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:18; Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 7:22, 23).

## **IV. THE WHITE STONE WAS GIVEN TO THE VICTORIOUS ATHLETE.**

We observe that Paul was familiar with the Olympic and Isthmus games (I Corinthians 9:24-27). As was the custom, when a momentous victory was won by a competing athlete, he was given not only a laurel about his head (I Corinthians 9:25), but he was also given a white stone that assured him financial benefit for the rest of his life. If his funds were low, he could come before the treasury of Rome and upon presentation of his white stone, he could then reach into the coffers with both hands at certain designated times and take valuable gems and/or precious metal (I Corinthians 3:21; Philippians 4:13). The athlete's victory lasted far beyond the day of his winning competition.

## **V. THE WHITE STONE WAS GIVEN AS A BADGE OF AUTHORITY.**

Often the father and older sons could not leave their farms and businesses to go to the market. Therefore, the youngest son was sent to the market in the place of the father. It would be easy to presume that the youngster had stolen the product, therefore it was necessary to take a white stone with the identifying mark of the father, validating that the son was prepared to do business for the father.

These early Christians could have decided to “hole-up and hide-out,” but the Lord could have been saying in the token of the white stone, “No matter what, serve me until I return!” (John 20:21; Ezekiel 27:9; Luke 19:13).

#### **VI. THE WHITE STONE WAS GIVEN AS AN INVITATION TO A BANQUET.**

In Luke 14:16, 17, Jesus said, “...A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.”

Our Lord could have been using this as an encouragement to those broken-hearted with the circumstances in which the communication of the Gospel had placed them. But Christ could have been reminding His servants of the truth found in Luke 6:22, 23, i.e., no matter how dark the day, no matter what is done to you on earth, you have heaven and the wedding supper of the Lamb to look forward to! “And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:9).

#### **VII. THE WHITE STONE WAS GIVEN TO COMMEMORATE ETERNAL FRIENDSHIP.**

When someone had to be separated from a great friend or family member, a white stone would be split in two and one piece would be given to one and the other half to the other. This would be a token that one day they would see each other again and when those pieces were joined they would celebrate (John 15:15-17).

When Christ died on Calvary, was buried and rose again, He left us the gift of the Holy Spirit, which was a promise that we would be together with Him again (Romans 8:19; Ephesians 1:14; II Corinthians 1:22; 5:1-8)!

-Pastor Pope-