

Theme: We are seeking to build a church that is centered on the Person and work of Jesus Christ, the Risen, exalted God-Man who has Redeemed us.

I. Intro - Mission Creep

- A. The expansion of a project or mission beyond its original goals, often after initial successes - Wikipedia
- B. First used about Somalia in 1993 by Washington Post and NY Times
- C. Originally in Somalia for humanitarian aid; then UN got involved; then more military; ended with Black Hawk Down incident
- D. Slow but sure watering down of original purpose and focus - a real danger for the church
- E. What is our central focus? Where do we find out "center"?

II. A Christ-Centered Passage

- A. Section is centered on the Person and Work of Jesus
 - 1. Jesus is the Reality; we are but a shadow
As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — ⁵you 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 2:4–5
 - a. Jesus is the Living Stone - this is Ultimate Reality
 - b. In Jesus we become like living stones - but only as we "come to Him"
 - c. This is about the Resurrection - He has been raised from the dead, and in Him we too will be raised!

- 2. Jesus is chosen by God and precious to Him; our acceptance is based on this
As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him... ⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:4, 9
 - a. Jesus was rejected by humanity, but chosen by God
 - b. Jesus was cast aside by humanity, but is Precious to God the Father
 - c. We too may be rejected and chosen by humanity - but we are chosen and precious to God
 - d. But our being chosen and precious to God is only in Christ - we have no status as God's People apart from Him.
- 3. Jesus is the High Priest Who purifies and makes our service to God acceptable
As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — ⁵you 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... But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
1 Peter 2:4–5,9
 - a. In Jesus we have become priests before God (v5,9)
 - b. Part of our priestly work is offering worship to God
 - c. Even our worship is only acceptable through Jesus
 - d. He must purify and take our worship to the Father

e. Apart from Jesus, even our best efforts are corrupted by sin and unacceptable to God, but in Christ even our most meager efforts bring delight to our Father God.

4. The destiny of every human is determined by their response to Jesus

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,"⁸ and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message — which is also what they were destined for.⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:7–10

- a. There are 2 groups - believers and unbelievers
- b. Unbelievers reject Jesus the Stone as worthless or insufficient and are themselves rejected by God
- c. Believers see Jesus the Stone as precious and place their trust in Him, and are therefore accepted as God's people
- d. The eternal destiny of every human is not based on their efforts, but on their response to Jesus and what He has done and offers to them

B. Jesus is the focus and fulfillment of all Scripture - from Genesis to Revelation

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. Luke 24:25–27

1. Jesus says all of Scripture is about Him - and disciples should have known and believed this
2. All Scripture pointed to Jesus' Person and work
He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Luke 24:44–47
3. Law, Prophets, Psalms (writings) - 2 sections of Jewish Scripture - the whole Old Testament
4. All of the Scripture is about Jesus - His Person, work, death, resurrection, and the salvation He offers through the Gospel
5. Question 3: What is the central message of the Bible? - The central message of the Bible is that God is bringing glory to Himself through the Person and work of Jesus Christ as He creates and redeems a people in whom He lives by His Spirit so that they will glorify and enjoy Him forever.
6. It is impossible to build a biblically base Church that is not Christ-centered, because Jesus' Person and work is the central focus of all Scripture!

III. Building A Christ-Centered Church

- A. The worship of a Christ-centered church must be focused on Jesus and His work, rather than us and our needs
1. The first question in worship should never be “What do I like” but what does Jesus command and desire
 2. The focus in worship is not what will be popular but what Jesus commands and desires, and what focuses peoples attention on Him.
 3. The focus of our worship must be Jesus Himself - not what I want or I am bringing to God, but what He wants and what He offers to me in Christ
 4. All of our worship - songs, prayers, Word, sacrament, and fellowship - must be focused on Jesus and His work in our behalf.
- B. The teaching ministry of a Christ-centered church must be focused on proclaiming Jesus and calling everyone to come to Him
1. If Jesus is the focus and fulfillment of all Scripture, it is not possible to accurately teach the Scripture without reference to Jesus Christ and His saving work.
 2. Because Jesus is the ultimate reality in the universe, the only ‘relevant’ and ‘practical’ teaching is to point people to Jesus as the answer for all of their needs
 3. This is true of our Sunday morning teaching, children’s ministry, and other teachings - everything should ultimately point back to Jesus

- C. The ministry of a Christ-centered church must be focused on Jesus and His work, rather than us and our needs
1. It is not that our needs are not important - but they are not ultimate. Jesus, His Work, and His Will are ultimate.
 2. The driving force of all our ministry must be to see God glorified, His Gospel proclaimed, and His truth exalted and embraced.
 3. This does not mean we do not strive to meet human needs - but that is always a secondary desire. In obedience to Him we serve others and meet needs, but it flows from our faith in Christ, and points back to Him.
 4. We are ultimately only faithful and useful as a congregation if our life and ministry are focused on Jesus

IV. Applying the Word

- A. Am I living a Christ-centered life?
1. A church can only be as Christ-centered as the individual members
 2. Have I personally repented of my sin, and embraced Jesus through the Gospel?
 3. It is impossible to be Christ-centered unless I have been converted!
 4. Is Jesus and His will as revealed in Scripture central in my life - or an add on?
 5. Do I have a passion to know Jesus and make Him known to others?

B. Am I helping to build a Christ-centered church?

1. Do I support a church that teaches in a Christ-centered manner? Or do I encourage a focus on me and my needs?
2. Do I support a church that worships in a Christ-centered manner? Or is my focus on my personal “experience”?
3. Which type of congregation do I support with my presence, my prayers, my giving, and my labors?
4. Let building a Christ-centered local church be a high priority in your life!

C. A prayer for a Christ-centered life and church

A Christ-Centered Church

1 Peter 2:4-10

January 14, 2018

Prayer

2 Corinthians 13:14

Teaching keywords: Church; Jesus; gospel

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2

Corinthians 13:14

As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — ⁵ 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. ⁶ For in Scripture it says: “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.” ⁷ 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,” ⁸ and, “A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message — which is also what they were destined for. ⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:4–10