

July 2015

Dear Brethren:

Many precious promises to the faithful followers of Christ are recorded in the book of Revelation (of Jesus Christ to the Apostle John). One particular message to the seven churches contains a promise to the faithful overcomers who respond to the invitation to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

The promise is becoming a pillar in the Temple of God. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out" (Revelation 3:12).

There are many places in the Bible that talk about pillars and their significance in the work of God. One of the earliest examples of the use of the word pillar is associated with Jacob's vision of the ladder. At that time, God reconfirmed the Abrahamic covenant with Jacob, and Jacob himself also entered into a covenant with God.

In commemoration of this, Jacob erected a pillar as a memorial of the event taken from the very stone he had used for a pillow while he slept and beheld the vision.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. . . . And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee (Genesis 28:16–17, 22).

A pillar is something that is stationed or set up—a column or memorial stone that is unmovable. Later, God came to remind Jacob that: "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred" (Genesis 31:13).

When an agreement of peace was made between Jacob and Laban, pillars were used:

Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee. And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar . . . And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee; This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm (Genesis 31:44–46, 51–52).

Later in Jacob's life, while dwelling in the land of Canaan, he built an altar to the Eternal who once more appeared to him:

And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins . . . And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone . . . (Genesis 35:11, 14).

On all of these occasions, the significance of a pillar to commemorate a vow of agreement is clearly established. The primary use of the pillar was to mark the setting up, or establishment, of a particular relationship with God and of continuous fellowship with Him by one who had such a special association.

Pillars of Fire and Cloud

Another familiar scriptural use of the word pillar is found in the many Old Testament passages describing the departure of the Israelites from Egypt and their years of wandering in the wilderness. This pillar took the form of a cloud by day and fire by night. When Israel departed from Egypt this pillar marked the pathway of their journey, giving them direction.

And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people (Exodus 13:21–22).

After the Israelites left Egypt, Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he pursued them with his army. As his forces approached their encampment, this same pillar of cloud and fire served as a protective barrier for the Israelites against the Egyptians.

. . . the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night (Exodus 14:19–20).

During forty years in the wilderness, this pillar was with the Israelites, standing over the tabernacle when they were encamped, and leading them to a different location when, in God's due time, they moved.

And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle (Deuteronomy 31:15).

Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go (Nehemiah 9:19).

The brightness of the cloud and fire made the presence of God with the Israelites very evident. It served as a reminder that He was dealing with them and that His desire was to fulfill the promises He had made to them.

Pillars of Solomon's Temple

A more traditional use of pillars mentioned in the Bible is found in the erection of buildings, particularly in the construction of the Temple of Solomon.

For he cast two pillars of brass, of eighteen cubits high apiece: and a line of twelve cubits did compass either of them about. And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin: and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz. And upon the top of the pillars was lily work: so was the work of the pillars finished (1 Kings 7:15, 21–22).

These two names have meaning: Jachin—He shall establish; Boaz—in it is strength. This was a prophecy of the Kingdom that God was going to establish through David's seed. Read 2 Samuel 7:12–13, 15–16. This is talking about the future Kingdom that God will establish by His Messiah. The Apostle Peter asked Messiah what they who were following Him would receive. Messiah responded by giving the assurance of Matthew 19:28:

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (compare Revelation 3:21).

This promise waits for those who are called by Christ, who yield to their call and remain faithful.

Pillars of a Spiritual House

The prophecies of Isaiah 4:2; 11:1–10 and Jeremiah 23:5–6 identify the promised Messiah as the Branch. Now the spiritual Temple is being built—the House of God.

But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end (Hebrews 3:6).

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5).

It is this special, chosen class—those who are begotten of the Holy Spirit and respond to the invitation to run the race—who, if they remain faithful unto death, will obtain the prize of the high calling of Jesus Christ and become pillar stones in the Temple of God. Each one will be privileged to share in the work with Jesus to bless all the families of the earth when the glory of God fills His true Temple and His Spirit is shed forth throughout the earth.

Those who are called are being built up as the individual pillar stones of Ephesians 2:19–22. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 the Apostle Paul said: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

Apostles Were Pillars

The Bible says that the apostles were pillars. The Apostle Paul named some and called them pillars in Galatians 2:9:

And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship

These true pillars were preaching the sound truth because they were used by God to carry His message to the world. They were not to preach their own theories and did not change what they were commissioned to teach. They taught the same Jesus and the same gospel. They held the first faith, which is unchangeable.

That is why Paul gave a warning to the church in Corinth:

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him (2 Corinthians 11:4).

In Galatians, the Apostle Paul warns that a curse will follow those who preach another gospel or those who twist, misuse or belittle the Word of God (Galatians 1:8). Those who do these things are not pillars in the Temple of God. It is a good work to be a pillar in God's Temple; to be shaped by Jesus and used by God now; to be kept faithful and submissive to His will. We read of this in 1 Samuel 2:7–8.

Our Endeavor to Be Pillars

As we strive to be spiritual pillars in our daily lives, we are in reality endeavoring to develop the mind of Christ, because it is He who is the chief cornerstone of the Temple. We are never to doubt what God has asked and expects of us. When God appeared to Moses in Horeb, instructing him to return to Egypt to lead the Israelites forth from bondage, Moses expressed doubt that they would believe and follow him. God answered by asking, "What is that in your hand?" (Exodus 4:2). This calls attention to the fact that God's power will enable His servants to use profitably whatever the Lord provides in doing His will.

Visiting isolated brethren, calling those who need encouragement, and writing letters or emails of support and comfort, can provide a blessing to the recipient and an opportunity for spiritual growth to the one performing such service. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4).

In this way the called out ones are being fashioned as pillars—living stones, being shaped and polished, that they may be tightly framed together into ". . . an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21), "which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:17). The true Church of the living God, the Body of Christ, is to be established as a pillar on the foundation of Jesus. To each of these pillars, our Lord has promised that ". . . I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God . . . which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name (Revelation 3:12).

The name of Christ will be written upon these pillars:

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth . . . (Philippians 2:9–11).

During this present age our Heavenly Father is calling and working with a few who have made a covenant with Him as He spoke by the mouth of the Psalmist: "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Psalm 50:5).

Let us remember what God said through Christ to the Apostle John in Revelation 3:12: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God."

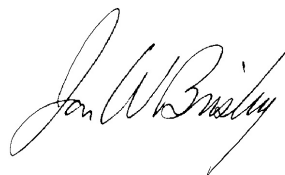
Do you strive so that one day you will be one of the pillars in the Temple of God? Many today stumble and have forsaken the Truth. Winston Churchill once said: "Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened."

May God, the source of strength, give you power to stand as a pillar.

Yours in the service of
the soon-coming King of Glory,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Isaya Owak', with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Isaya Owak

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon W. Brisby', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jon W. Brisby