

I once traveled to Egypt to speak to some brothers there, and upon my return I clearly saw a great change in the nature of the landscape. The terrain changed from sandy desert to a significantly rocky soil<sup>1</sup>. In some way I saw that this emphasized the nature of God, who came to be presented to us as a Great Rock<sup>2</sup>.

Later, when I met my artist friend<sup>3</sup>, she showed me some of the items that she had created from rocks she had collected from different areas around us. These designs ranged from wall hangings to necklaces and other decorative items. It was amazing the many different things that she brought out of the rocks<sup>4</sup>.

These pieces come from the ground in various forms, usually very rough, though some are smoothed by wind and water. Each had its own identity and set of characteristics, symbolizing its imperfections, much like the way that God treats each of us differently. She then puts them through a process of transformation where they were polished, painted, and given an imaginative facelift. The stones then became objects reflecting the beauty of God, bringing enjoyment and praise to their Creator. To her they symbolized God's strength and faithfulness, for He is the "Rock of our Salvation<sup>5</sup>".

The development of the artist's work using this medium was another of her creative outlets, and she felt the strength of Christ in her every artistic effort. She told me of her confidence that our creations are a gift from the Lord and that we should use them to serve others<sup>6</sup>. Just as she worked the rough material into something meaningful, she thought of how whitewater rapids soften the jagged edges of river rocks and she saw the parallel to how God's truth can transform our broken thoughts into a firm foundation for our faith<sup>7</sup>. She offered the hope that these items would help people think of God's grace such that it changed their lives.

The prophet Jeremiah promised that God's hope and desire for us to be His people would be written on our hearts<sup>8</sup>, and Ezekiel proclaimed that our hearts would be transformed from stone to flesh as God revived our souls<sup>9</sup>. What was once written in stone, as with the ten commandments, would now be a living part of us. What will be written now in stone is the new name by which we will be known<sup>10</sup>.

The most beautiful story about the power of a rock<sup>11</sup> is that of the cornerstone or capstone (Christ) that provides the foundation of our faith, as Isaiah prophesied, "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.<sup>12</sup>". That Rock has indeed changed the course of human history!

1. "After Israel left Egypt in the exodus and eventually moved north toward the Holy Land, the terrain changed. Sandy Sinai deserts began to give way to the distinctive terrain of Judea. Rock became a symbol of God." The Bible and the Land (Ancient Context, Ancient Faith); Burge, Gary M.; p.69
2. "I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He." Deuteronomy 32:3-4.
3. This idea came from Liz Lowry, through her artistic work.
4. The Old Testament mentions several things that came through rock or stone: 1) water (Exodus 17:1-6 and Numbers 20:1-11), 2) honey and oil (Deuteronomy 32:13), 3) fire (Judges 6:21), 4) gold and lapis lazuli (Job 28:6), and 5) olive oil (Job 29:6).

5. “The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” Psalm 18:2.
6. “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:10
7. I took these thoughts from “Just as whitewater rapids soften the jagged edges of rocks into smooth river stones, so does God’s truth transform the shards of our broken thoughts into a firm foundation upon which we can build our faith.” Soul Detox: Clean Living in a Contaminated World; Groeschel, Craig; p.51
8. Jeremiah 31:31-33
9. Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26; quoted in the New Testament - Heb 10:15-18; 2 Cor 3:1-3.
10. “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.” Revelation 2:17.
11. The Old Testament also mentions many uses of rock or stone – 1) building in general, and especially as a protective wall (1 Kings 7:12, Ezra 5:8), 2) an altar for burnt offerings (Exodus 20:25), 3) a pillow (Genesis 28:11), 4) for engraved messages, including the ten commandments (Exodus 28:11, Job 19:24), 5) cut and/or polished to enhance beauty (1 Kings 7:9), 6) to provide a stable and secure place (Psalm 27:5), 7) to destroy a statue in a dream (Daniel 2:45), 8) to create a marker (Exodus 24:4), 9) as weapons (1 Samuel 17, 2 Chronicles 26:15), 10) to represent a false god (Leviiticus 26:1), and 11) as a strong key piece to solidify a building - a cornerstone or capstone (Isaiah 28:16).
12. Isaiah 28:16, as quoted in 1 Peter 2:6.

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