

I traveled to a region near the wilderness, to a village named Ephraim<sup>1</sup> that was near the edge of the Judean wilderness. This was a place that Jesus used to go to when He needed to get away from His adversaries for a while. My purpose was to preach to others about Christ and His kingdom in pursuit of my mission for Him.

I knew that John the Baptist preached in the wilderness<sup>2</sup> in his own God-ordained mission to prepare the way for the Christ. Even though it was called a wilderness, there were villages and groups of people living there. He himself had been living there when the word of God came to him<sup>3</sup>.

I found a man there looking around a building that had been greatly damaged during a heavy storm<sup>4</sup>. The roof had fallen in when the walls broke down, and several people had been seriously hurt. The structure had collapsed and there was a great deal of scattered debris around it.

I began talking to the man, who was a builder<sup>5</sup>, and he described the story of the collapse of the structure. He had been consulted when construction began, and he related the story with great sadness and frustration of how his years of building experience had simply been ignored. He had studied the proposed location and had realized that the land was likely to be unstable. Ultimately, the building had been built on an unsubstantial surface feature that had broken through. There was only sand underneath, which reminded me of the words of Jesus about the foolishness of that type of construction<sup>6</sup>. Ironically, he was asked to investigate the root cause of the disaster and comment on an effort to rebuild. He could have put the blame on those who insisted on ignoring his advice<sup>7</sup>, but he knew that this approach would not really be effective.

The builder came from a family of builders<sup>5</sup>, who had taken part in the construction of many things<sup>8</sup>. They had shown their competence in the use of a variety of materials and were often engaged in the repair of structures<sup>9</sup>.

His counsel, with his decades of experience, was not listened to by those who were focused only on their own plan, which they had not prepared very well<sup>10</sup>. As he told me his story, I thought of a story recorded by the Preacher:

*There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siege works against it. Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. So I said, "Wisdom is better than strength." But the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.<sup>11</sup>*

Indeed, not being listened to was the fate of most of the prophets<sup>12</sup>, and especially our Lord, and He often encouraged his followers to hear. He did so especially to those who built their houses on sand.

The builder was ready to retire after his counsel was rejected<sup>13</sup>. I counseled the builder to tell his story, and assured him that there were those that would listen to him. I referred him to the Preacher, who wrote, "So I saw that there is nothing better for a person than to enjoy their work, because that is their lot. For who can bring them to see what will happen after them?"<sup>14</sup>. His expertise would endure through the creative and competent work that he had been involved in – the lasting structures that kept people safe.

Jesus, I knew, was a carpenter and builder as was His "earthly" father<sup>15</sup>. He was likely experienced in various types of materials, not just wood, and engaged in the building and or repairing of different structures<sup>16</sup>. He certainly had to use prepared metal tools to work with wood and stone. Being a creative being, His experience as a builder reflected that characteristic<sup>17</sup>. Part of His work was to repair things that were broken, and this ultimately extended to His repair of mankind's broken relationship with God<sup>18</sup>.

He can repair our souls as well. The Preacher also implied that only God can truly straighten what has been made crooked<sup>19</sup> – made crooked that is, by mankind.

Jesus came to earth to build a new kingdom. He is the Logos involved in building the universe<sup>20</sup> and providing the proper spiritual foundation<sup>21</sup> for us all. He must be listened to (and followed) to avoid disastrous collapse in our spiritual lives. The walls of Jericho collapsed<sup>22</sup>, not because they were not built on a solid earthly foundation, but because they had no spiritual foundation. The original temple in Jerusalem fell in a similar way; the foundation it was built on was firm, but became eroded as God's people began to ignore Him in their pursuit and worship of other gods. Jesus predicted that the rebuilt temple would also be destroyed, the immense blocks being torn apart because the people of Israel did not listen to God<sup>23</sup>.

The foundation that Christ has built for His new kingdom is a living foundation, and we are like living stones<sup>24</sup> that become are precisely fitted together to become part of the house of God<sup>25</sup>. The foundation of Christ is the Rock on which that kingdom is affixed, and the power of Satan cannot damage it<sup>26</sup>. We must, therefore, not ignore the wisdom of such an experienced builder.

## References

1. John 11:54.
2. Matthew 3:1,3; Mark 1:3-4; and Luke 3:4.
3. Luke 3:2.
4. Look at Ezekiel 13:10ff at the idea of a violent wind tearing down a whitewashed wall.
5. "J. I. Packer also states that tekton means 'craftsman or builder in wood, stone or metal.'" <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-qa/qa-archives/question/was-joseph-carpenter-stone-mason-or-metallurgist/>.
6. Matthew 7:24; Luke 6:48.
7. "Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?" Luke 13:4.
8. For instance, yokes, plows, tools, homes, wells, walls, roadways, boats, tombs, and even tunnels (remember Hezekiah's tunnel, 2 Kings 20:20)
9. <https://godsblessing.org/definitions/doctrines-and-beliefs/biblical-meaning-of-tekton/>; also, the artist friend is a 'tekton' as well!
10. Consider Luke 14:28-30 and the need for planning and engineering; "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'"
11. Ecclesiastes 9:14-17.
12. Therefore this is what the Holy One of Israel says: "Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit, this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant. It will break in pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found for taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern." Isaiah 30:12-14
13. Consider the re-shaping of 2 Samuel 17:23; "When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his hometown. He put his house in order and then hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father's tomb." In our scenario, after our advice is not taken (we are not listened to), we go to our office, put it in order, and retire!
14. Ecclesiastes 3:22.
15. See Matthew 13:55 (father) and Mark 6:3 (son).
16. <https://godsblessing.org/definitions/doctrines-and-beliefs/biblical-meaning-of-tekton/>.

17. <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-ga/qa-archives/question/was-joseph-carpenter-stone-mason-or-metallurgist/>.
18. <https://howtobecatholic.substack.com/p/why-did-jesus-have-to-be-a-carpenter>.
19. Ecclesiastes 7:13b.
20. John 1:1-3.
21. "By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw ..." 1 Corinthians 3:10-12.
22. Joshua 6.
23. Mark 13:1-32.
24. "As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him — 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." 1 Peter 2:4-5.
25. Think of the stones fitted together like Paul's description of the the body in Ephesians 4:16; "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."
26. "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." Matthew 16:18.