

# “Keystone”

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Acts 4.1-12

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## Stone

Those medieval cathedrals, like Uppsala Cathedral, were built over decades and centuries, by generations of craftsmen. They used simple technologies, with only human and animal power. Not a computer chip in sight. But they understood the forces of gravity and friction. So they could fashion these breathtaking, almost living places where ordinary people are lifted into worship of awesome God.

Tens of thousands of stones, each quarried, formed, then fitted precisely. Most stones form the walls. Some, the pillars.

There's one, the cornerstone. It is the first laid down. It's the reference out from which all other stones are set.

There is another stone, though, that makes the whole thing work. It's easy to miss. Unlike the cornerstone on the ground, this is set far above.

This sort of ceiling is a *rib vault*. It's a group of arches, joined together.

An arch is brilliant technology. It's a curve made of stones. The weight pushes downwards. The stones compress, which makes them even stronger. An arch doesn't need mortar to hold it together, and can last as long as the stones do (a very long time).

They'd built one like this: setting up a wooden frame, then laying each stone, carved wedge-shaped, beside the one before. Then the final stone that joins the ends of the arch. Take the frame away, and the arch stays firm.

This final stone doesn't carry a lot of weight. What it does is lock the other stones into place. The arch can hold a heavy load, stretched across large spaces, creating this expansive wonder.

That last stone is often covered with a carving. So you don't even see it. But without it, the arch would give way and everything collapse.

This last stone, this vital stone that holds everything together . . . it's the keystone.

## Keystone

Let's go to the Scripture story we just heard. Peter is defending his actions before the authorities. He says his authorization comes from *Jesus, the Messiah, from Nazareth*.

That's right. That Jesus, who these same authorities conspired to destroy, and thought they had. Except God authorized Jesus! God raised him from the dead.

Peter remembers for them a Scripture, Psalm 118. (We used it to begin our worship).<sup>1</sup>

*This Jesus is the stone you builders rejected.  
He has become the head-of-the-corner stone.*

That's what it says, literally "*head-of-the-corner*." You can see how that's often brought into English as "cornerstone." It makes sense. The whole building grows from the cornerstone. Jesus is the head, the source from whom we grow, his church grows.

But I think "keystone" —remember, the keystone and the cornerstone were different stones— makes better sense of what Peter says.<sup>2</sup> It's the head, the top, and at the corner where the sides of the arch meet. Peter compares Jesus to a stone that got tossed aside. On a construction site, a tossed-aside stone won't later be used for the cornerstone, because that got laid down at the start. But you can imagine a tossed-aside stone being vindicated later to crown the arch.

#### Holding Everything Together

Jesus is the One and Only, who holds everything together. Everything, and I mean everything, holds together because of him.<sup>3</sup> Everything is being brought together —reconciled— through him and by him.<sup>4</sup> How is this possible? Only because in Jesus is the fullness of God.

So the peace he teaches and shows us, he also makes happen himself. The reconciliation of all enemies he models and promises, he also fulfills himself. The New Creation he inaugurates, he also completes himself. He is holding it all together . . . the Keystone.

But the keystone is small. Often hidden.

Hmm. Look at how Jesus went about his business and continues to do his work.

Small. Often hidden.

He didn't strive for seats of power, or for places considered glorious. He didn't surround himself with the rich and famous, not unless they were willing to be broken, and sit with him among the little, poor, outcast, and despised. That's where

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<sup>1</sup> Jesus used the same passage to describe himself, in Luke 20:17.

<sup>2</sup> [grammarist.com/usage/capstone-keystone-or-cornerstone/](http://grammarist.com/usage/capstone-keystone-or-cornerstone/);  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keystone\\_\(architecture\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keystone_(architecture));  
[thunderofgod.wordpress.com/2012/10/06/1906/](http://thunderofgod.wordpress.com/2012/10/06/1906/);  
[www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/capstone.html](http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/capstone.html);  
[www.jstor.org/stable/44089448](http://www.jstor.org/stable/44089448).

<sup>3</sup> Colossians 1:17.

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 1:20.

Jesus found his companions and friends, his followers who by his authority change the world.

Jesus is our keystone Lord. We, his keystone disciples.

Honeybee

Preston Pouteaux is a minister with a congregation in Alberta.<sup>5</sup> He is also a beekeeper. He's been thinking about what he learns from bees, and how they teach him about following Jesus in our neighbourhoods.<sup>6</sup>

You know what honey bees do. They fly around the neighbourhood, finding flowers. They want the sweet nectar, which makes honey, and pollen. They fly that back to the hive, to feed the swarm, especially the babies (pupae).

When they get the pollen from one flower and bring it to the next, some rubs off. If the second plant is the same species as the first, we've got baby making! Pollination. More and more plants.

They bees don't care about that. They're doing their own thing. But the rest of us. . . .

About 1/3 of our food depends on pollinators to grow, pollinators like the honey bee.

Without them taking pollen from one plant to another, none of these plants survive.

Honey bees. They're small, and hold everything together. Like a keystone.

In fact, bees are what they call a "keystone species." A keystone species plays a vital role in keeping a whole ecosystem going. Its role is far more important than you'd guess by its numbers alone. Beavers and prairie dogs, wolves, even sea otters and elephants . . . these are all keystone species. And yes, the honeybee. Without them, the whole ecosystem would change dramatically. It might all die.<sup>7</sup>

Because of them, the whole environment survives and flourishes.

Keystone Neighbours

Bees can show us how we can be neighbours.

Following Jesus' Way, we act with love for our neighbours. Together, we are in the business of sharing blessings in our neighbourhoods.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.lakeridgecommunity.com/prestonpouteaux](http://www.lakeridgecommunity.com/prestonpouteaux)

<sup>6</sup> Preston Pouteaux, The Bees of Rainbow Falls: Finding Faith, Imagination, and Delight in Your Neighbourhood (Skyforest, CA: Urban Loft Publishers, 2017). Kindle Edition.

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keystone\\_species](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keystone_species)

Like bees.

We talk about people being “pillars” of the community. In a cathedral, the pillars are like giant tree trunks, very strong and plainly visible. You can't miss them. We celebrate pillars in our community, and they are vital.

But in a cathedral, take away the keystone, and it all crashes down on the pillars.

As Jesus' people in our neighbourhoods, maybe he is calling us to be more like keystones. Not the most noticeable, but essential.

Preston writes that keystone people

*support and give shape to the health of their community. Keystone neighbours are life-giving people who in time become so important to the world they help create.*<sup>8</sup>

What makes a keystone neighbour? Listen to what else he says:

*Keystone people are those who see themselves as participants in God's big story for the places where they live.*

God loves your neighbourhood. God loves it's people, every single one of them. In them, and in your community together, God is working out a story: a story of renewal and vitality, a story of reconciliation and peace, a story of blessing and hope.

Think of your neighbourhood.

Think of God's story in your place.

Imagine yourself as a keystone there.

God is placing you, precisely, to work in ways that often won't be seen. Like connecting people. Finding small ideas and bring them to life. Keeping watch, observing, seeing patterns. You bring pieces together, imagining how what is broken might be fixed. You are a person of peace. A person of hope. Humbly. Always with love.<sup>9</sup>

Why? How?

Because the Keystone, Christ Jesus lives in you.

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<sup>8</sup> Chapter “Keystone People,” paragraph 6.

<sup>9</sup> Chapter “Keystone People,” paragraph 10.