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WHAT IS IN THE STONE?

Mayan Revelation Number 214

THE SCULPTOR AND THE STONE

DELAY MAY DEFEAT YOU

THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION

MATTER AND SPIRIT

HAVE A PLAN

WATCH FOR THE FALSE STROKE

WHAT IS IN THE STONE?

BELOVED CENTURION:

It is a little difficult to explain to you what you will discover in the pages that are to follow in this lesson. The title, "What Is in the Stone?" I am sure does not now suggest anything to you.

Suffice to say that the images you have in your own mind are what you will find in the stone. In other words, think of yourself as a sculptor preparing to carve out something in the stone that now has only a rough, hard surface. "But", I hear you say, "I am not a sculptor. I am not an artist. How can I create anything out of a stone with a chisel and hammer?"

That, my dear Student, is true. You may not be a sculptor or artist, and we are only using the stone as an illustration to show you that whatever you carve out of life is that which your imagination brings to light in your own mind, for in order to accomplish anything, we must first have imagination.

Imagination is essential to creation. As a matter of fact, the faculty of having imagination is the great force behind all human activity and the principal source of all our improvements. It is true that some people are too imaginative, they are not realistic enough, but at the same time, a man without imagination, becomes as a clod; there is no fire or creative ability within him.

Ability to create on our part does not mean solely artistic ability such as to be a fine singer, or a fine artist, or instrumentalist - it means anything that we do well, no matter how menial the undertaking, is the result of inspiration and imagination. Maybe it is must the act of doing a kindness for others, maybe it is carving a place for yourself in your church or community, being someone worthwhile among your friends. Mainly it is to get from the stone something that will live forever, long after you are gone. That which you carve in life is now leaving its impact, not only now but in the future - some image that has been in your mind that you have brought out for everyone to see, appreciate and enjoy.

Let us then try to understand what this lesson is pointing out and make every effort to apply its teachings in your own life. And above all, never feel that this may be fine for some people, but not for you. Do not take that attitude. You do not have to be an artist to find your place in the sun. You do not have to be a sculptor to carve into the stone what your image is in your mind's eye. You can carve your own place in your own way. It needs only to be something worthwhile and something good. It can be simply the carving of the character you would like to be. Learn to use the great possibilities that are within you. They are there. They need only to be developed.

As you make every effort to understand the underlying truths given in this lesson, ask for divine help in the following prayer, and then proceed.

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PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I ask Thee to give me insight and guidance as I try to realize the best possibilities Thou hast ordained for my being. Amen.

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THE SCULPTOR AND THE STONE

Imagine a sculptor standing in his studio. His hammer and chisel are in his hands, and before him is a block of stone silently awaiting his gifted touch. What image will he cause gradually to take shape till a work of art has taken the place of the raw stone? It will be the one he now sees hidden in it. He will simply chip away the covering till the picture in his mind is released.

What is the image that is in the stone for him? It is not the only one that is there. That block of stone holds countless forms, a different one for each sculptor in the world who might be standing there with a mallet and a chisel

in his hands. That stone is only a raw possibility of any one of countless images, any one of them done inspiringly, well, indifferently, or poorly, according to the skill the sculptor can or cares to use. No one would know what is in the stone for him till he has chipped the waste from around it and released it to view.

Any statue or carving you could ever see is an image that once existed only in a sculptor's mind and a block of stone. Through the sculptor's skillful hands his inspired mind has released the image from the stone to be the permanent picture of a thought.

You are a sculptor, the area of space where you live your life is a studio, and before you is always a block of possible living and action. From such possibilities you are always releasing images, actualities developed from possibilities. What you do in the world, each act being a chisel stroke, is simply the process of clearing away the imprisoning material and letting the image that was in your mind stand forth free.

What is in the stone for you? It is the image of the picture in your mind. For anyone else it would be a different picture. You can carve your thought image poorly or well. You can use much of your ability or little. If your skill is small you can improve it. If it is great, practice and care might make it yet greater. In any case, you can do your best.

Have you been in an art gallery or an exhibit of sculpture and seen the people coming to look at the materialized thought images there? Some of these were the work of artists already gone from the world, yet here are people still looking at them, receiving images of their thoughts into their minds, and carrying their impressions away in their lives. For them the world will be a little different as long as they live, and that has been true for those who have come every day since they were there.

Spectators may have seen no name carved on them, but people for years to come will be looking at the images of action you release today, being affected by them and affecting the world because of them. Rather a good reason, isn't it, for releasing worthy images from the blocks of life waiting for us to make of them what we will?

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THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION We often wonder at someone's ability to paint a picture or carve a statue, and ask the secret of it. There are three: - an observant eye, a sure hand, and a creative imagination. The last is really the first and most necessary requirement, for however competent the eye and hand may be, they would have nothing to carve or paint without it.

This is just as true of our daily work as it is of carving statues and painting pictures. Everything we do is something added to the world's life, and should therefore be as nearly a work of art as we can make it.

This is true of the building of a career, the writing of a book, the creation of a business, the making of a reputation, the training of a mind, or the

development of a character. But it is also true of the so-called little things, the humble tasks, the common responsibilities, which are really sometimes harder to do than the so-called big things are.

What have you laid out, or what do you need to lay out, for the work of today? It may seem of small importance, but it is not. There is no telling how much may depend on how a lawn is mowed, a house set in order, a conversation conducted, a letter written, the children gotten off to school, or any number of other little-noticed things are done. A creative imagination can make them memorable, just as the lack of it can make them only drab and meaningless chores. Envision them as something fine and meaningful. Let that be the image in the stone, then carve it out that way. Grandma Moses demonstrated that it is never too late to begin seeing the inspiration in things and putting creative imagination to work; - but don't think you have to be a Grandma Moses. Use it on whatever you have to do to make it what you would like to have it be.

Of course, this is applied idealism. Idealism is having worthy ideas and believing they can be made real. An ideal is only a model, a pattern, the picture of a possibility. We have to supply the creative energy to release to view what our creative imagination has conceived. If we did not do so it would wither and come to nothing.

We often hear someone say, "I have an idea that seems to haunt me. I can't seem to get away from it." That is the voice of an image in the stone pleading to be released, a picture begging to be painted, a possibility begging to be realized. It is asking you to do it. That challenge is being heard by no one else, but it may be if you do not answer it. You have been honored by being chosen and called to do that thing and give it to the world.

A creative imagination is a priceless possession, but it is vitalized only by creative effort. It is not a fanciful thing. Its concepts are not will-o-the-wisps. They mean something, and that what they mean is possible for you. It is for you to decide whether it shall remain a possibility or become a reality.

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HAVE A PLAN Everything that advances life is constructive. Everything constructive begins with a plan, a plan being an idea either spoken, written, or unexpressed. Creative imagination, like so many other things, at once suggests a plan. That is the imagination part of it.

Never let anyone convince you that a good, vigorous imagination is anything to be ashamed of. Letting one's imagination run away with itself, and carry him into an idle, aimless, unproductive dream life, is not good, of course; but that is exactly what an imagination is really given us to prevent. It is to make patterns with, and patterns are made to carry out. If one stops with the pattern and wastes his opportunities, he has only himself to blame.

He has imagination to stimulate him to important and calculated endeavors. If he misses its point he defeats the purpose of having it. To disregard the use of your imagination is exactly like being an architect who never looks at his

drawing board. To have no imagination is like trying to be an architect without any drawing board. This rarely occurs, and when it does the reason is likely to be that he has stunted his imaginative powers because he had the mistaken idea that they were impractical, and let them waste away.

You can cultivate your imagination and keep it strong to serve you by thinking out plans and patterns of whatever you are interested in, would like to do, or need to do. A farmer should envision what his farm might be and produce, a business man what his enterprise might be and do, a housekeeper the possibilities of her home, and anyone how his personality and way of life could be developed and improved. Everything, even the progress of humanity, must begin that way in the minds of dreamers, but dreamers whose purpose is to make their dreams come true.

That is something of what we mean when we talk about having a plan, and it indicates how necessary it is to do so. It is what goes on all the time in the advancement of life and the progress of the human race, and the need is to increase and accelerate it. Everything, from a new flower bed to the infinite starry heavens with their balanced and speeding planets, works that way. Behind each is a plan, and ahead of it is the fulfillment of that plan.

A certain man had a genius for chairmanship, presiding over large and important conventions. He could do it with precision, correctness, and effectiveness all day and day after day, never forgetting an item, missing a point, making an unparliamentary ruling, or allowing an issue to be unclear. It was said of him at the beginning of a day he had the day's business in mind like an efficient housekeeper might have the work of the day planned from the beginning. That is the creative plan. Have it in your mind's eye, then do it. Seeing it like a drawing or a sketch, you can examine it for corrections and improvements; but having done so, always remember that the next thing is to get it into operation.

This is not just for the great things, so called. What are the great things? One of them, for you is simply doing rightly and now whatever you need to do. Set it up in your mind. Let it grow and unfold if it will. Then get it carved into form before the picture fades.

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DELAY MAY The last sentence above is something to remember. A drawing, a
DEFEAT YOU sketch, or a working model, will last; but if you do nothing about
 them too long your interest may wane and you may never get at them,
or you may get at them and find that you cannot proceed with the enthusiasm and
clearness needed to make the result what it might have been.

It is even worse if you have only a mental concept. One who reads, sees, hears, or thinks of something impressive and important, and thinks he will use it, repeat it, or think it over more carefully, had better have his notebook handy and get it down at once in the form in which it came to him. He will find that only a little while later he may have forgotten it, or at least reached the point where it is useless to try to get it down as he conceived it. What he writes then will be cold, bungling, and ineffective. All writers are familiar with this fact of

the psychology of doing creative work, and all who do any work of any kind should be. Observing this law gives the world many wonderful things, while failure to do so costs it many others that would have been just as wonderful.

Have you had constructive ideas for making, doing, or improving something flash into your mind at some time when you were not expecting anything of the kind? Like rockets they blazed for awhile, affecting you something like a night time dream does till after one awakes. If you proceeded to do anything about this flash of vision you probably found that you had remarkable freedom and that you were doing something to be proud of. If, on the other hand, you took it as merely a passing experience, or only wondered why and how such things happen, the effect wore away, and the experience soon passed from memory.

There is another way in which inspiration comes, which is probably also possible to anyone. It may come in times of quiet meditation, when after concentrating on a given thing awhile a break-through occurs, and one finds himself filled with a great realization of some kind. He may even see with closed eyes or in the dark subconsciously induced symbols - dream pictures - that explain its meaning.

That was what the Psalmist meant when he said that while he was musing the fire burned, or what St. John meant when in explaining how he came to write the Book of Revelation he said he was on the Island of Patmos, in the Spirit, on the Lord's Day. Many great books, poems, inventions, discoveries, deeds, and inspired words of all kinds, have started. Someone mused till the fire burned.

Do you realize that what we have been discussing is inspiration, and that if you have had it you know what it is to be inspired? Do you realize that this is what happened to holy men who wrote books of scripture, and that when it happened to you it was the honor of invitation to do something the same way they did? When we catch these things on the wing and carry them out, the result always glows with a more than earthly light. But even inspiration is lost if one does nothing about it.

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MATTER AND SPIRIT What a marvelous thing it is that happens when a sculptor begins chiseling on a piece of stone! The cold, dead, voiceless, meaningless material begins to take form, at first roughly, then more and more precisely and in detail. This means that something coming from living spirit is working on the inert material, bringing it to life and putting meaning and inspiration into it. That is a way life and inspiration have. They spread their radiance and power all around them and into everything within reach. It is indeed a marvelous thing.

Exactly the same thing happens, however, in everything creative you or anyone may do. The creative spirit is back of everything worthwhile accomplished. The housewife takes cold, inanimate dishes, silverware, curtains, furniture, floor coverings, and the like; washes, cleans and dusts them; and arranges them into a kitchen that is a work of art. The farmer does the same with his land, the workman with his tools, the teacher with his materials, and all the rest of the real

workers of the world and whatever it is they work with or on. It is the same with whatever you do, or might do if you so decided - spirit working with skilled abilities on matter to turn it into beauty and give it meaning.

The world has grown from jungle and desert into meadow, woodland, and city, because creative minds turned skillful hands to the historic task of subduing the earth. Look at your work. Look at your hands. Look at the pattern of what might be done to change raw material into finished beauty and utility, to repair some damaged thing or situation, and to restore - perhaps to increase - their loveliness and worth. Consider all your possibilities of applying spirit to matter and see if it does not thrill you with the thought of what you are and can do. Surely it will also arouse you to begin seeing how much that is fine and lovely you can obligate the world and the ages to yourself for having done by the miracle process we have been describing.

Why do we ever let life be dull, uninteresting, and unproductive, when it has such amazing possibilities for any one of us any time and anywhere, when we can exert this miracle power of creativeness, see it work, and have its gracious results to use for ourselves or dedicate to others? There is something wrong if life fails to be wonderful and beautiful for any one of us, no matter what his situation or condition may be.

The world of the future, the total world life or that small and localized part of it that is yours is gradually being developed by this very creative process, the counterpart of the way in which the Infinite Creator originally ordered the universe into being. We, as He did, breathe into raw material the breath of life, and it becomes a living soul. Spirit, your spirit, breathes upon whatever is the block of stone before you, and it takes on life, meaning, value, perhaps even glory, as you work.

Do not let your possibility-charged day be just one of listless coming and going, of motions without any real purpose of carving some fine actuality out of possibility. There is something fine in that stone before you. Chisel it out.

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WATCH FOR THE FALSE STROKE Every moment the sculptor stands before his block of raw marble he is faced with one possibility that must charge his heart and hands with care. Chiseling an image out of a piece of cold stone requires a vast number of individual strokes. Little by little the image appears as he works. First the general contours must be shaped, then the numberless details, then all the fine touches and little distinguishing marks that give the image its individuality and enable the beholder to know exactly what it is and what it means. If it is the image of a person they even enable him to know whose it is.

What sculptor could estimate at any stage of his work how many chisel strokes he has already made or how many he will yet have to make? Perhaps even after he thinks he is all through he may see that one more little gentle, precise touch is needed on the curve of an eyelid, the turn of a forehead, or the arrangement of a lock of hair. This stroke even more than those that have gone before must be made with the utmost precision. Exactly the right amount of force must be

applied, exactly in the right direction, and exactly to the right point. If there is the least variation in it the whole production will be spoiled. That would have been true of any stroke from the beginning, but it becomes increasingly possible as he works more deeply into the final details.

No matter how important a piece of work may be, no matter what its possibilities are, no matter how much it might bless people of the future, a single false stroke will spoil it. If the sculptor is a dedicated worker he will realize that it is too important to spoil, that he has no right to spoil it. That is the terrifying thought with which a sculptor has to live all through his labor.

What if he does spoil it? If he is exacting of himself he will not let the marred image stand. He can throw it away, but that would be a pitiful waste. He may, like the potter with the vessel marred on his wheel, change the pattern and make something else, and it might turn out quite as valuable as the one he set out originally to produce.

In the daily round of our tasks we are not under such strict limitations. A false stroke may not wholly spoil what we are doing, but it does detract from its perfection. The point is this: try to make every task you undertake a masterpiece. Avoid mistakes with it, but if you make one do not let it dismay you. Correct it if you can, change the plan if it seems worthwhile, discard it if you must; but in any event go ahead and try again. Whatever you create: a hill of wheat, a pan of bread, a picture, a speech, a conversation, or anything else, try to make it a work of art. The fewer false strokes you make, the more of a work of art it will be.

Keep vividly in mind the miracle that is taking place at your hand. You are breathing life into something that did not have life before. You are passing something of your spirit on to the future. Well done, it will serve, challenge, and inspire others to do likewise with their time and ability.

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WHAT IS IN THE STONE? We close this lesson by asking you to consider in review the question to which the sculptor must reply as he stands before the block of raw stone but has not yet touched it with his chisel - what is in the stone? The answer, of course, determines what it is he will undertake to release and bring forth from its hiding place, doing it as well as the sum of his skill and effort makes possible.

The image he will see in the stone will be something that grows from his own mind, spirit, viewpoint, and habit of thinking. It cannot come from anywhere else and be natural to him. What we see anywhere and in anything is really a mirrored image of ourselves, and the sculptor's stone is no exception. There is a variety of possibilities but they all come from within himself. They are the kind of things he would think about, be interested in, want. No one else in the world would have a mental storehouse of the same kind of images.

The same is true of the great number of possible pictures you carry about - pictures of things you might do today or some other day. Whatever you do will

bear your own imprint. When we think of the distinctive work of a Praxiteles, a Landseer, or a Wagner, those who understand will think at once of the general type of production it will be. For instance, no one else could have written Wagnerian music, and Wagner could not have written any other kind.

If you could change inwardly you might see in the stone of possibility something different tomorrow, next year, or some other time. When there is a quality, good, bad, or indifferent, in the essential nature of what anyone paints, carves, sings, or does, look for its reason in the person himself. The pattern will be there, and the work will be only a projection.

That will indicate what is in the stone for you. It is what you will almost automatically begin to create. You could change it only by changing your own nature. You might try to do something else, but you would not do well at it. It will bear your image, even as we bear the image of our Creator.

What will be its nature? Will it be artistic, utilitarian, plain, fancy, or what? They are all there in the stone, and what comes out will be what is both there and in your own nature. Anyone who knows you will know the house you keep, or the business you operate, or the letter you write, as your own. You do a certain thing in a certain way, because its image is a part of you. If you want to improve your work, first improve yourself.

What shall be its motive? Will it be something for your own benefit or for that of someone else? Really it should be for both, for our interests are all intertwined. If you work entirely for others you will neglect yourself. If you work only for yourself you will become ingrown.

So what is in the stone for you? What will it be when you have chiseled it from the darkness of its prison? However massive or small, however complex or simple, one thing about it is sure, - creating it will be just as easy and far more pleasurable if you make it a masterpiece.

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AFFIRMATION

I realize that I am a sculptor of deeds.
Making them represent the best that is in
me tends to make that best still better.

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Blessings,

Your Instructor.