

V. Living Stones

October 26/28/29, 2020

1 Peter 2:4-10

Aim: To recognize that the church of Jesus Christ is the New Testament people of God and the heir of all the privileges, promises, and position of Old Testament Israel.

Gardner: This section is one of the most profound of the letter and a great treasure for the church in all generations.... Sadly, Christians often neglect the fact that re-birth brings them into God's *family*, into His special community. They understand that are God's 'sons and daughters' (2 Cor. 6:18), and think of their relationship with their Father, but they fail to see the importance that God gives to the other members of the family, to those whom we call 'brothers' and 'sisters.' This is what the church is all about but, interestingly, Peter does not use the word. In fact, here he is much closer to calling the Christian community 'Israel' (see Gal. 6:16), for he teaches us about the church with ideas and words that were applied in the Old Testament to Israel.... In this wonderful section Peter develops the corporate identity of God's people, describing them as 'a spiritual house' and a 'holy priesthood.' ... As the apostle takes us back into the Old Testament he is not saying that they should become Jews. Rather, he is saying that the Gentile church is part and parcel of the whole people of God built on the same foundation of Jesus Christ.

MacArthur: In this portion of his first letter, Peter continually examines the kaleidoscopic array of Christian privilege and rearranges the same basic truths into multiple images so that his readers might see the multifaceted glory of what it means to be children of God.

Dorani: First Peter 2:4-10 says that our faith defines us. Because Jesus is God's foundation stone, we are living stones. Because He chose us, we are a chosen race.... Our passage, 2:4-10, describes the basis for Christian community. In 1 Peter 2:4-10, the apostle calls his churches a 'chosen people, ... the people of God,' and imputes to them the status of a new Israel. Throughout, *Peter assumes that to come to Christ is to come into this community.*

A. A Spiritual House (1 Peter 2:4-5)

McKnight: In these two verses, Peter raises two distinct themes, both of which are developed in what follows: 1) the twofold response to Christ in His earthly and heavenly ministries (acceptance or rejection, discussed in 2:6-8), and 2) the spiritual nature of the church (developed in 2:9-10).

Helm: These are stunning words, and elevating beyond measure. In one sentence Peter grasps the entire wealth of Israel's identity and applies it not to Jesus alone, but to any man, woman, or child who comes to faith in Christ! When we come to Jesus—not the city of Jerusalem—we come to the 'living stone.' When we come to Jesus—not to Judaism—we come into God's kingdom. When we come to Jesus—not the ornate temple—we become God's 'spiritual house' and 'holy priesthood.' These phrases, applied metaphorically here to Peter's early readers, represented the most exalted ideas within all Judaism. After all, the spiritual house was the temple. If God was going to dwell anywhere in the world, certainly His presence would be there. In addition, the royal priesthood consisted of those honored ones who had the privilege of standing in the very presence of God. Yet now, following Jesus' example in usurping these ideas, Peter claims that in Christ these truths are likewise transferred over to every follower of Jesus. In essence, the church has become God's people and God's place in the world. Truly,

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with these phrases ‘a spiritual house’ and ‘a royal priesthood,’ Peter is raising the identity of his early readers to stored and unimaginable heights.

1. Living Stone (2:4-5a)

⁴*As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,*

⁵*you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house...*

a) Jesus (2:4)

(1) Coming to Him (2:4a)

⁴*As you come to him...*

Gardner: *As you come to Him* refers to an on-going activity in the life of a believer. It is all about relying upon Jesus, trusting the word of God, and growing in spiritual maturity. Ultimately, as we have seen, if we crave spiritual milk. We crave Jesus and so we come to Him. As we do this so we find we *are being built into a spiritual house*. As the picture of a spiritual building replaces the picture of a baby needing food, Peter introduces imagery based on several Old Testament text, three of which he actually quotes.

MacArthur: It is by *coming to Christ* that believers enter the realm of spiritual privilege.... The compound verb *coming (proserchomenoi)*...conveys more than a mere drawing close to Christ for salvation. The preposition *pros* is a prefix to the normal verb *erchomai* and adds intensity, denoting a drawing near to Christ in intimate, abiding, personal fellowship.... For Peter, the word implied the movement of the entire inner person into the experience of intimate and ongoing communion with Jesus Christ.

Doriani: Above all, the church is *Christ’s* community. Peter begins: ‘you come to *Him*.’ Apart from Jesus, there are religious and moral communities, but the church is the one community centered on Jesus rather than morality or spirituality.

(2) Rejected by Men (2:4b)

...a living stone rejected by men...

MacArthur: Peter then used the metaphor of *a living stone* to identify the One to whom believers come—Jesus Christ—and to launch his discussion of spiritual privilege. *Stone (lithos)* sometimes refers to a carved precious stone, but usually it means ‘building stone.’ The Old Testament designates God as the only rock (Dt. 32:3-4, 31), the foundation and strength of His people. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the rock (2:8; 1 Cor. 10:4) and the *stone* on which the church rests. Here Peter’s image is of a stone that was perfectly designed, shaped, and hewn out to become the cornerstone of the church, not merely a stone but *a living stone*. That living stone is Christ because He lives forever, having risen from the dead.... The absence of a definite article before *living stone* emphasizes the *living* quality and divine character of Jesus Christ.

Gardner: Peter refers to Jesus as *the living Stone* who was *rejected*. Jesus Himself had quoted from Psalm 118:22 and applied it to Himself in Matthew 21:42.... Peter himself had also used the text in Acts 4:11 as he spoke of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Gardner: The idea of the ‘stone’ here plays on two different reactions to Jesus. A stone can be a wonderful solid foundation on which to build a substantial structure. Yet a stone can also cause a person to stumble. If someone fails to see a rock or stone on a footpath and trips, he can

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stumble and fall. This is exactly what happens as people encounter Jesus. Some find that they stumble. They do not see Him for who He is. They miss seeing Him altogether and so fall down.

MacArthur: Even though Christ is the source of all spiritual privileges, He *has been rejected by men*. That phrase primarily refers to the Jewish leaders and the Jewish people who followed them in demanding Christ's crucifixion. But Peter's words also encompass everyone who has rejected Christ since that time. *Has been rejected (apodedokimasmenon)* means 'rejected having been examined or tested.' ... He simply did not measure up to any of the Jewish establishment's expectations.

Dorani: The imagery evokes a specific sense. Before erecting a building, stonemasons search piles of rocks for boulders with the size and shape to become foundation stones, cornerstones, and capstones. Jesus depicts them as discarding one after another. They finally see the perfect stone, which represents the Messiah. But when they examine it, they reject it, too. So Israel's putative leaders searched for their Messiah, but when they found Him, they judged Him a false prophet (or worse) and killed Him.

(3) Chosen by God (2:4c)

...but in the sight of God chosen and precious...

Gardner: Nevertheless, though rejected *by men*, Jesus was, like the Christians to whom Peter writes (see 1:1-2) *chosen by God and precious to Him*. For this quotation, Peter turns to Isaiah 28:16, where God speaks of laying a precious cornerstone as the foundation stone for Zion, for those who will believe in Him.... Others see him and believe and then obey Him. For them Jesus becomes a foundation stone of the building into which they are being drawn.

MacArthur: Even though unbelievers have rejected Jesus Christ, He *is choice and precious in the sight of God*.... God elected and ordained Christ...as Peter's use of *choice (eklekton)* indicates. God also considered Jesus *precious (entimon)*, which means 'costly, highly prized, rare' (cp. 1:19; Ps. 45:2).

Sproul: I find it interesting that here Peter did not use the word *rock* (Greek *petros*), which is the name Jesus gave him (Mt. 16:18).... Here Peter uses the word translated 'stone.' This is the stone that the people despised. We have come to a living stone that others flee from. They have rejected Him, but this stone, in the language of Peter, is the elect stone, the One whom the Father has elected, and the One that in God's eyes is considered precious. What is odious to us in our fallen condition is considered precious by God Himself.

b) Us (2:5a)

⁵you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house...

(1) Living Stones (2:5a)

Gardner: The 'stone' who is Jesus brings life to His people. But His people are also like stones being built by God's Spirit into a structure, as it were, within which (or among whom) God will be praised. They will witness to Him and live for Him. They will not be *shamed*.

MacArthur: When sinners come in faith to Christ, the 'living stone,' they too become *living stones*; when someone believes in Christ he shares His life (cp. Jn. 17:21, 23; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:15-16; 1 Jn. 3:2). To be *living stones* means that believers have the eternal life of Christ. They are united with Him, which is their first spiritual privilege. They do not just worship Him, obey

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Him, and pray to Him. They are united with Him as stones in a spiritual building of which He is the cornerstone. Christians become partakers of the divine nature (Col. 3:3-5; cp. Gal. 2:20).

Sproul: Not only is Christ the stone that is living, elect, and precious in the sight of God, but also all who belong to Christ participate in His life as being ourselves living stones, chosen of God. This epistle of Peter's is shot full of the doctrine of election.

(2) Spiritual House (2:5a)

Gardner: The temple was a *holy* place where God's presence was known and where offerings and sacrifices were made to Him.... Peter thus looks at those who belong to Christ and sees that they are the inheritors of all that was spoken about God's people in the Old Testament. They are like the temple, the place where offerings and sacrifices were made. They are a *spiritual* house in that they have been called into being by God and are a people rather than a literal building.

MacArthur: In the old economy, God's temple, representing His presence (1 Kgs. 8:10-11; 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:2-3), was a temporal, material house (Lk. 21:5; Jn. 2:20); but in the new, believers are *being built up as a spiritual house* (that supersedes any material building (Eph. 2:20-22; Heb. 3:6). They constitute God's spiritual temple (cp. Acts 17:24; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 6:16), which Paul called 'the household of God, which is the church of the living God' (1 Tim. 3:15; cp. Heb. 3:6).

McKnight: Peter states that the church is a *spiritual house*, that is, the temple of God. Presumably, he sees this temple as the replacement of the old temple as the dwelling place of God.

Sproul: All of a sudden, Peter gives a metaphor of the church as a building, but this building is made up not of bricks and mortar, but of living stones, of people. We are the church, because the church is made up of stones that are alive.

Helm: With these words Peter cements his thought in an architectural metaphor. Notice: he is moving beyond the idea of the church being God's family (1:1-2:2). Further, he will leave to the Apostle Paul the metaphor of the church as Christ's 'body.' What he takes for himself, though, is the architectural metaphor of the church as God's building.... Can you begin to see the impact this metaphor of God's *spiritual house* would have on those early readers? Remember, by and large they were followers of Jesus living in out-of-the-way places. They were off the beaten path; they were geographically removed from Jerusalem's great stone temple, the place of culture and religious action in the world. They were the dispersed ones, some of them far from home—not merely from Heaven. But now, by way of a single metaphor, Peter proclaims that they are at the very heart and center of God's activity in the world. They are God's building, and in Christ they are being build up into a residence intended for God's very presence. To put it as simply as I can, they must have been thrilled to learn that their identity was secure. They were God's special building project.

Helm: Other implications can be drawn from Peter's metaphor of a spiritual house. First, his teaching cuts directly across the contemporary notion that we need sacred space. People are God's sacred space. The New Testament does away with the idea of being at home anywhere outside of faith in Christ. His Spirit dwells within us. There is no need for us to lean on brick and mortar in an effort to get close to God. In fact, we can't get any closer to God than through faith in Christ.

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Helm: Second, in light of Jesus' claim that He fulfills the Hebrew Scriptures' promise of a house, the notion that some of God's promises to Israel still need to be fulfilled should be questioned. There is no need to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. And in this sense, contemporary Zionism, as well as blind support for Israel in all things political, especially among evangelicals, might be, in some ways, misguided. After all, the apparently unfulfilled rebuilding of the temple, as put forth in a text like Haggai 2:6-9, has already found its fulfillment in Christ and the church, as proven by Hebrews 12:18-29.

(3) Peter the Rock

Doriani: Peter's teaching also has roots in the Gospels, where Peter confesses to Jesus, "you are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16). Jesus replies, 'I tell you that you are *Peter*, and on this *rock* I will build My church.' This line contains a play on words (16:18). The name *Peter* means 'rock' or 'rocky' in Greek. Jesus makes subtle use of this, for when He continues, He uses a slightly different word when He says that 'on this rock I will build my church.' The Greek (transliterated) reads, 'You are Peter [*petros*], and on this rock [*petra*] I will build my church' (*petros* and *petra* have nearly the same sense, roughly like *rock* and *stone*).

Doriani: We wonder what Jesus means by this small shift. In a sense, Peter is the rock of the church, and yet not quite. Observe that Jesus did not tell Peter, 'On you I will build My church,' but 'on this rock I will build....' If Jesus had wanted to refer to Peter, who is standing right there, there would have been a less convoluted way to do it. We conclude, therefore, that Peter is not, *in himself*, the rock of the church. Instead, Scripture says that *Jesus* is the church's cornerstone and foundation. Thus, when Peter confesses Jesus, he continues to build a foundation that has Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:19-20; Mt. 21:42; cp. Mt. 18:18). Peter himself is not the rock, because he is too unstable. Indeed, a few minutes later, Peter rebuked Jesus and told Him that He must never go to the cross. Later, he denied Jesus Three times. Later still, his bout of legalism, mixed with fear, caused a crisis in the Galatian [actually, Antioch] church (Gal. 2). A church built on Peter would be shaky indeed. But Peter did have a pivotal role as the spokesman for the apostles. He testified to Jesus in Matthew 16, then at Pentecost, and then in other moments in the life of the church.

2. Holy Priesthood (2:5b)

...to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

a) Our Role (2:5b)

Gardner: Priests offered the sacrifices in the Tent of Meeting in Moses' day and later in the temple.... Priesthood functioned in two ways, to bring the people to God in the offering of sacrifices and the leading of worship, and bringing God to the people through the teaching and proclaiming of His Word and the witness of a holy life. Through Moses (Ex. 19:5-6) we hear the Lord looking forward to a time when all His people would function in these priestly roles as they bring the Lord to the nations and witness to Him in the worship of their *holy* lives.... They are also a *holy priesthood* since they *offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*.

MacArthur: Believers also function as a *holy priesthood*. Unfortunately, many people associated 'priesthood' with the unbiblical model found in the Roman Catholic Church. But when the Bible speaks about believers being 'priests,' it does not refer to the Catholic system, nor to the old covenant priesthood in which only a single tribe of priests could officially serve God in sacred

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ceremonies.... Under the New covenant, such limitations do not exist, since all believers are a *holy priesthood* (cp. 2:9).

Doriani: In the Old Testament, the break between priests and people was sharp. God had set apart the priests to offer sacrifices and forgiveness, to pray for the people, and to instruct them in His truth (Jer. 37:3; Mal. 2:7; Heb. 5:1-5). But now we are all priests (cp. Rev. 5:10). We all pray and ask forgiveness. We have access to God without intermediaries or permission slips (Rom. 5:2). We can understand God's Word because we know God and He leads us into all truth (Jer. 31:33-34; 1 Jn. 2:27).

Sproul: We are not just a spiritual hose; we are a priesthood. This passage was very dear to Martin Luther. When he spoke about the priesthood of all believers, he was not saying that there is no distinction in the church between clergy and laity; the New Testament lays the foundation for those distinctions. Luther was saying that the priesthood of the New Testament is given to the whole Christian community. In the Old Testament, the basic function of the priest was to offer up sacrifices to God in keeping with the sacrificial system of the old covenant.

Helm: Peter calls all believers a *holy* (v. 5) and *royal* (v. 9) *priesthood*. This means that every Christian is the ultimate insider. We are not merely representative of God's place in the world; we serve as God's priests before the world.

b) *Our Responsibility (2:5b)*

Gardner: Many passages in Scripture speak about the type of sacrifices that are *acceptable* to God. He alone determines what is appropriate by way of sacrifice. Scripture makes it clear that the chief question about the acceptability of a sacrifice has to do with the heart of the worshiper or the community (cp. Ps. 51:17).... These *spiritual* sacrifices are about the offering of oneself as a whole person committed to serving the Lord. This is what the community, the church, the whole building must bring to the Lord: a people wholly committed to him in love and praise and worship. The apostle Paul summarizes this in Romans 12:1.

Gardner: In the Old Testament the priests and people could only come into the temple to meet with God through a sacrifice made for sin. When Peter says that the church must offer sacrifices, these are not, of course, sacrifices for sin. They are sacrifices of thanksgiving and response to the saving work of Christ in dying for His people and bringing to them forgiveness of sins. God's people come *through Jesus Christ* whose own sacrifice on the cross for His people has gained for them access to the Father.

MacArthur: The primary function of the Old Testament priests, as they ministered in the tabernacle and then the temple was to offer animal sacrifices to God (Ex. 29:10-19; 2 Chr. 35:11). But when Christ inaugurated the new covenant, animal sacrifices were no longer necessary (Heb. 8:13; 9:11-15; 10:1-18). Now the only sacrifices remaining for the priesthood of believers *to offer up*, according to Peter, are *spiritual sacrifices*.... Obviously the Old Testament priests were to offer sacrifices that met God's requirements. The animals they offered were to be the best—blameless, spotless, and without defect (Ex. 12:5; Lev. 9:2-3; 22:19; Num. 6:14; Dt. 15:21; 17:1).... New Testament priests have a corresponding responsibility. Even though they enjoy the privilege of unrestricted access to God's presence (Heb. 10:19-22), Christians still have the serious responsibility of offering spiritual sacrifices that are *acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*.... The New Testament sets forth seven basic, acceptable spiritual sacrifices for Christians: their bodies, their praise, their good works, their possessions, their converts, their love, and their prayers.

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McKnight: The *impact* of their spiritual house is that they are to become *a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*. The metaphorical emphasis of their ministry provides both a breadth of vision and a lack of specific clarity when we try to unravel this image. Just what is a spiritual sacrifice? The wide variety of possibilities prevents us from contending that it is only one specific thing. It is probably best to see something like the list of behaviors typical of early Christian churches (e.g., 4:7-11).

Dorani: Scripture suggests how our sacrifices can approach His standard. Peter has already defined holiness as a way of life, not as a series of singular events (1:15-16). Long ago, Asaph and David called prayer, thanksgiving, and a repentant heart a sacrifice (Ps. 50:14, 23; 51:17). Paul calls the dedication of mind and body ‘a living sacrifice’ (Rom. 12:1). In Peter, spiritual sacrifices are first something offered to God as worship and second, a pattern of social conduct. The worship always precedes conduct. So Peter’s sacrifices are the daily devotion of obedience and praise to God, as well as practical ministry to the needs of men (Heb. 13:15-16).

Sproul: The sacrifices that the priests offered were physical sacrifices, animals and grain offerings. We are a different kind of priesthood, a spiritual priesthood, in which each believer is called to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God. At the very heart of worship is the concept of offering of sacrifices.... Paul wrote in Romans that we are to present ourselves as living sacrifices to God, which is our spiritual worship, or reasonable service (12:1). SO, the first way in which we function as spiritual priests is by offering the sacrifice of praise to God, which is what worship is. Worship is not entertainment. Worship is when the people of God lift up their praises, adoration, and affection to God. Just as the priests lifted up the blood offering in the Old Testament, we lift up our reverence and adoration to God in praise. We do not come to church to watch the minister do that. We are all to do it.

Sproul: Trying to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God on our own merit is just as repugnant to Him as those sacrifices were in the Old Testament (cp. Is. 1:13). What makes them precious to God and a sweet aroma to Him is that they are offered through Jesus Christ. Our sacrifice of praise, our spiritual sacrifice, is carried to the Father through our great High Priest, who sanctifies our worship. Apart from Christ, our worship would not be acceptable to God. It is Christ who makes worship acceptable and pleasing to Him.

B. A Precious Stone (1 Peter 2:6-8)

1. The Precious Cornerstone (2:6-7a)

McKnight: This digression concerns the themes of 2:4-5, especially as found in 2:4: the one who was rejected by human beings but who was considered precious by God. By rooting this theme in an Old Testament text (Is. 28:16), Peter establishes that this theme was in fact predicted long ago by the prophet Isaiah. Peter first *cites the text*.

a) *Isaiah 28:16 (2:6)*

For it stands in Scripture:

*‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’*

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(1) Stone (2:6a)

⁶*For it stands in Scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious...*

MacArthur: Peter...introduc[es] Isaiah 28:16 with the phrase *this is contained in Scripture*, testifying to the inspiration and authority of the prophetic book. That verse is an important messianic statement (cp. Paul’s reference to it in Rom. 9:33) that promised when Christ came He would be the cornerstone of God’s new spiritual house, which is made up of believers (cp. Mt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:19-22). God, through the prophet, called His people to *behold* or view Messiah as the special stone that the Father Himself laid *in Zion*—Israel, and more specifically, the mountain in Jerusalem (cp. 2 Sam. 5:7; etc.). Messiah will come to that city to establish His spiritual kingdom among those who believe in Him. Christ did come to Israel, to Jerusalem, and though He was rejected...He did establish His spiritual rule over the hearts of all who believe in Him (cp. Lk. 17:20-21). Figuratively, *Zion* can refer to the new covenant as Sinai does to the Old Covenant (cp. Gal. 4:24-25), or to heavenly blessings as Sinai does to judgment (cp. Heb. 12:18-23).

MacArthur: Christ is not only a living and choice stone, but He is also *a precious cornerstone*. The Greek word translated *precious* (*entimon*) means ‘unequaled in value,’ ‘costly,’ or ‘irreplaceable.’ Christ is irreplaceable because he is the cornerstone, the most important stone in any building. The word translated *cornerstone* (*akrogōniaios*) denotes a chief cornerstone and describes the stone that sets all the proper angles for the building. It is like the building’s plumb line in that it sets the horizontal and vertical lines for the rest of the building; it also establishes the precise symmetry of the entire edifice. To ensure the perfect precision of God’s spiritual house, the main cornerstone had to be flawless.

McKnight: Thus, the verses Peter draws from [Is. 28:16-29] concern the promises of God to provide a way of salvation, but this salvation is not accepted by the people. What Peter sees in Isaiah is an analogous situation in the response of the contemporaries of Jesus; just as the leaders of Israel rejected God’s offer in the stone laid in Zion, so people in Peter’s time were rejecting the one who is precious to God.... The Stone has been laid, but those who walk in Zion trip over it.

(2) Shame (2:6b)

...and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’

Gardner: As Peter addresses those who come to the living Stone, he brings encouragement to the faithful by saying that *The one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame*. In other words, the believing Christian will not face the humiliation and destruction of the final judgment (cp. 1 Cor. 1:27).

MacArthur: The word rendered *disappointed* (*kataischunthē*) denotes being deceived in some confidence, or placing hope in someone and having that hope dashed. Those who sincerely believe in Christ as Lord and Savior will never know any disappointment from Him. Instead they will be forever secure in Him.... Because Jesus Christ is the perfect, exact, precise One on whom God has built His church, all the lines coming from Him in every direction complete the perfect temple of God. No one is ever out of alignment. No one ever falls from the structure. It all fits exactly and permanently together (cp. Eph. 4:16). So here is one analogy that fittingly illustrates believers’ security.

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Gardner: It is worth mentioning another important Old Testament Scripture that may well have been guiding Peter's thinking here. In Isaiah 61:6-7 the prophet looks forward to the time of the Messiah's reign. His words bring together Peter's earlier emphasis on the inheritance that belongs to God's people with the fact that they will be called 'priests of the Lord, and that they will *not* be 'shamed.'

b) *Honor for Belief (2:7a)*

7So the honor is for you who believe....

Gardner: Peter first speaks in verses 6-7a of those who do *come to Him* [Jesus]. For these believing Christians, it is Jesus who is now identified as the *Living Stone* that God has laid, and to them (as to God Himself), *this stone is precious* (Is. 28:16). If this is the right translation, then the stone is precious precisely because it provides the solid and sure foundation on which those who are born again are built up into the people God would have them become. Yet a different translation makes better sense of the Greek, suggesting that the believer (v. 6) who is not put to shame is the believer who in fact receives *honor*.

MacArthur: Because of the *precious value* believers place in Jesus Christ, they possess a genuine affection for Him, which is in itself another spiritual privilege. This benefit is the joy of loving Jesus.... Only those *who believe* manifest a surpassing love for Christ.

McKnight: Peter then *applies the text* to the contemporary responses to Christ in Asia Minor and probably elsewhere (2:7-8). To those who respond in faith ('to you who believe') the Stone is *precious*, just as it is *precious* to God (2:4). But the positive response of believing is not developed until 2:9-10; Peter's prior concern is with those who disbelieve (2:7b-8).

Doriani: Jesus is the cornerstone of God's work on earth, but humans may either trust or reject Him. If we trust Him, we will share in His honor and never bear lasting shame.... Of course, all believers stumble momentarily.... But we do not stumble *so as to fall*. The Lord steadies us (Ps. 37:24). Indeed, Peter warns his people of impending trouble, so that they will not be surprised and falter.

Helm: This new and exalted identity is here held out for all who come to believe that Jesus is God's Ruler. Conversely, anyone who rejects Jesus as God's cornerstone shall stumble and fall. Put simply, what you and I do with Jesus will mean everything to our standing and identity before God.

2. The Rejected Cornerstone (2:7b-8)

a) *Psalm 118:22 (2:7)*

but for those who do not believe,

*'The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,'*

MacArthur: In utter contrast to that, however, *those who disbelieve* (such as the unbelieving Jewish leaders) do not and will not love Christ. Quoting Psalm 118:22, Peter asserted that the Jews were *the builders who rejected Christ (the stone)*.... The Jews examined but did not accept the One who *became the very cornerstone* (cp. 2:4). To them, Jesus was worthless as God's cornerstone because He did not fit their preconceived idea of what the Messiah needed to be like (cp. Mt. 13:54-57; Lk. 4:20-23; 6:6-11).

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McKnight: What he sees happening is an unfolding of two other ‘stone’ passages: Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14. That is, the living Stone laid in Zion is interpreted messianically in light of these other two texts. From Psalm 118:22, Peter argues that Jesus has become much more than a rejected stone, he has become the ‘capstone.’ (The ‘cornerstone’ is the first stone laid that forms the angles and foundation for the structure, whereas the ‘capstone’ is the last stone put into a building, which becomes its climactic stone.)... The tragedy is that those who thought Jesus was nothing more than a cause of ridicule will discover that, though they rejected Him, He has become the pinnacle of God’s house.

b) *Isaiah 8:14 (2:8a)*

⁸*and, ‘A stone of stumbling,
and a rock of offense.’*

Gardner: Nevertheless, the other side of this stone is that some will stumble and will be shamed (v. 8). Peter again quotes Isaiah, this time he uses Isaiah 8:14 to make his point... Since the stone is Jesus, it is the reaction of people what they hear of Jesus that determines whether they stumble or not... The message is the gospel of salvation in Christ and the need for faith in Him. This disobedience probably refers to a prolonged and adamant opposition to the gospel and the message of the Lord... Those who do not turn in faith to Jesus have disobeyed and so face judgment.

MacArthur: Such rejection was tragic but not surprising, as Peter indicated when he quoted Isaiah 8:14-15, which predicted that Messiah would be considered ‘*A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense*’ to most of the Jews, as Isaiah himself was (v, 12). *A stone of stumbling* was any stone that people could trip over as they moved down a road, and *a rock of offense* was the rock bed they could be crushed against after they fell over the other stone, In Peter’s symbolism, the Jews threw away the true cornerstone, then wound up falling over it to be finally crushed in judgment by the same rock (Lk. 20:17-18; cp. Mt. 13:41).

McKnight: From Isaiah 8:14, Peter draws from a passage where Yahweh, the Almighty, is the one to fear because He will be for both Israel and Judah a stone that causes human beings to stumble and fall in judgment. Peter finds the response of unbelievers to Christ to be just as Israel and Judah responded to Yahweh in their history: He became a source of judgment instead of salvation.

Dorani: In Jesus day, many rejected Him. Today, both the religious and the godless do the same because He fails to meet their criteria; He is too harsh, too demanding, too supernatural. But those who reject Him will fall. Jesus says that when they stumble over Him, He falls on them and crushes them (Mt. 21:44).

Sproul: Peter carries this metaphor to its conclusion by saying that this living stone to which we come has been the occasion for unbelievers to stumble. They trip over Christ. In their rejection of Christ, they miss the kingdom of God. The stone which they reject God has declared as the chief cornerstone of His church.

c) *Destined for Stumbling (2:8b)*

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

McKnight: Peter clearly has in mind the response of his contemporaries to the preaching of the word, for *they stumble because they disobey the message*—the ‘message’ being the preaching of the gospel accomplished through the church and by Peter (cp. 1:12, 25; 2:9; 3:1; 4:17). None of

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this surprises God. Those who know Scripture know that this *is also what they were destined for*. God's act of appointing Jesus as the living Stone has become both honor for believers and judgment for unbelievers; this was God's design, and everything happens according to His will.

Gardner: Peter now adds, *which is also what they were destined for*—words that have given rise to much discussion. Does Peter mean they were destined by God to disobey, in other words, were they predestined to do evil and so be judged? Or is it that those who are disobedient are predestined to stumble and hence be judged? Either view is possible here, but this strange statement needs further examination.

Gardner: The Greek word for *destined* can also be translated as 'appointed.' It is used elsewhere of God's appointing action (e.g., 1 Th. 5:9; Heb. 1:2; also Acts 13:47)... Here in 1 Peter the word has just been used in verse 6: 'I lay [I appoint] a stone...'. Clearly it is God who has done the appointing or predestining. God appointed or destined Jesus to be the stone, a stone which points in two directions: to salvation or to judgment. But here it is *they* who were destined, that is, the people themselves who disobey. In Scripture, the election of people to salvation is a cause of great rejoicing and reminds believers always that they are saved entirely by God's grace and that they are kept for Him and His glory (Eph. 1:3-6). Yet Scripture also talks, and perhaps this is what Peter really has in mind here, of some being passed over in God's sovereign will and so lost to judgment rather than saved from judgement (e.g., Rom. 11:7-8). Even though this is in God's hands and conforms to His will, we also learn that it brings Him great sorrow to see people being judged (e.g., Ez. 33:11; cp. 2 Pe. 3:9)... So Scripture leaves us with the understanding, which seems also to be in Peter's thinking here, that there is a sense in which people rebel and stumble as God has ordained, and yet this is not a pleasure to God, and their evil can in no way be attributed to Him. Rather each individual is still held responsible for his or her own sin (Jn. 3:18-19), even as God's sovereign will oversees it all... It is really important to see that this teaching is almost always used in the New Testament to bring real comfort to believers. Predestination reminds us that we are saved by God's wonderful and steadfast love and true grace, and it reminds us that He who chose us is the one who also sustains His people even under persecution and as they suffer in this world.

Dorani: If we are unprepared, we may falter, as the disciples did at Jesus' arrest. But those who permanently reject the gospel fall permanently, *which is also what they were destined for*, Peter concludes. Jesus states that people reject His kingdom for several reasons, such as satanic activity, distraction, self-righteousness, and blindness. The decision is theirs, yet God's sovereign hand stands behind all (Mt. 13:1-16; 23:13-28). Some say that the idea that some were *destined* to fall gives us an unjust God... Mercy is God's gift (cp. Rom. 9:14-15). He does extend His favor to one (Jacob) over another (Esau). But the accusation of injustice rests on a false definition. God always gives everyone *what he or she deserves* in the sense that He never punishes the innocent. He is perfectly fair in His *retributive justice*. It is true that He does not treat everyone the same way by giving identical gifts to all. Some are born strong, intelligent, or beautiful; others are not. Some have loving parents; others do not. Still, the Lord *never gives anyone less* than he or she deserves.... WCF 3.5 explains that God, according to His eternal purpose and good pleasure, predestines some to life. He does this by His free grace, not even because He foresees our faith or good works.... God is never unjust. Indeed, His person defines justice. If we say, 'I want justice,' we ask for condemnation. His mercy is our sole hope.

Sproul: People who are disobedient to the Word of God are tripped up by Jesus, this rock of offense. We hear from Peter the grim message that to this they were appointed or destined, as

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some translations read. We find here, as we have already in Peter's writing, reference to predestination, to the sovereign election by which God pours His grace on those whom He has chosen from the foundation of the world. We understand also that the doctrine of predestination is double; that is, it involves not only election but reprobation. This is clearly set forth in Romans 9, where Paul contrasts the destiny of Jacob to that of Esau. There are some who clearly understand that the Bible teaches election in the positive sense, but the idea that there is another side to it seems to be a horrible decree from which they shrink.... As Augustine pointed out, when God was considering the human race, He knew them prior to the fall as a mass of perdition, and out of this mass of fallen, unbelieving, disobedient humans, God chose sovereignly to bestow His saving grace on some but to allow others to do what they pleased. God simply passed them over. No one in this equation is subjected to divine injustice, but the redeemed receive grace and the unredeemed receive justice. People complain against this, saying that God is unfair to give His mercy to some and not to all. However, when we complain about God's sovereign grace in salvation, we see how gracious that salvation really is, because our complaining reveals how obstinate our hearts are toward the majesty and sovereignty of God. They were appointed to a destiny of judgment on the basis of their unbelief—their disobedience—because that is the inevitable conclusion for all who refuse to bow before Christ. All who reject the cornerstone find that very stone to be that which will trip them up forever.

C. A Royal Priesthood (1 Peter 2:9-10)

McKnight: In contrast to the unbelieving 'stumblers-over-the-stone,' Christians are the true people of God, who continue God's purposes that began with Abraham and Moses. There is no passage in the New Testament that more explicitly associates the Old Testament terms for Israel with the New Testament church than this one. Peter gives four descriptions for the church, followed by a declaration of its purpose. This, in turn, is followed by another description of the church.... Some reject the precious living Stone (Christ), while others believe. This group of believers has become the church—in Paul's terms, the 'true Israel of God' (Gal. 6:16).

Dorani: In 1 Peter 2, the descriptions of Jesus are singular and the descriptions of His people are plural. From this we learn that following Christ entails joining His community, the church. To accept the Redeemer means also accepting the people whom He has redeemed. The freelance Christian, who follows Jesus but is too good, too busy, or too self-sufficient for the church, is a walking contradiction. In the old covenant, God set His people apart *from* the nations. In the new covenant, He sets us apart as we live *among* the nations. But all of Scripture testifies that believers cannot be godly or fruitful without joining God's family and realizing some form of separation from the world.

1. Privileges of the Church (2:9a)

⁹*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession...*

Gardner: He develops ideas that we have already seen in 1:2 and 2:4 of a chosen and holy people, who are priests to God. This time, though, he has in mind Exodus 19:5-6. There we read that Israel was to be God's 'treasured possession,' and a 'kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' What a contrast with those who stumble! Here are a people who are truly special, not because they have done anything to deserve being *chosen* or belonging to God, but because they *have received mercy*.

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McKnight: It is important to recognize that these are Old Testament descriptions of Israel (cp. Ex. 19:6; Is. 43:20-21), not applied to the church of Jesus Christ and giving rise to the important teaching that the church is the fulfillment and continuation of Israel. God's purposes in Israel were not frustrated by the unbelieving rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ; instead, that event was planned by God to be the weighty foundation stone of the new people of God, who were to emerge after that crucifixion and vindication.... The four terms do not describe individual Christians; rather, they describe the church as a whole.... Peter is not describing individual Christians here as a chosen people or a royal priesthood; rather, these are states and functions of the church. However, the function of the individual is a mirroring of the larger body, so that Christians individually enjoy the privilege of access to God (because the church is made up of people who are together a priesthood).

Dorani: These honorary titles come from Exodus 19, when God constituted Israel as a nation, and Isaiah 43, when God promised to reestablish Israel after the exile. These are foundational statements about Israel. By applying them to His church, Peter tells Gentiles that the privileges of Israel are now theirs.

a) *Chosen Race (2:9a)*

MacArthur: To underscore the contrasting eternal destinies of unbelievers and believers, Peter begins this verse with a strong adversative, *but*. Unlike believers, who, because of their rejection of Christ are destined for eternal destruction, believers *are a chosen race*. They are a spiritual people elect by God Himself. The apostle again drew His terminology from an Old Testament passage (Dt. 7:6-9).... He identifies those who believe in Christ as *chosen*, just as God had chosen Israel for a special purpose within His redemptive plan (cp. Is. 43:21).... It is crucial for Christians to understand that their salvation is based on the sovereign, electing purposes of God.

Dorani: They may be aliens and exiles, cast out and rejected by their former people, but God has taken them in. They are *a chosen people*. The phrase 'a chosen people,' derived from Isaiah 43:20, also takes us to 1 Peter 2:4 and 2:6. As God chose Jesus, now He has chosen us. All of God's people, whether Jew or Gentile, are one community by faith.

b) *Royal Priesthood (2:9a)*

MacArthur: The concept of a *royal priesthood* comes from Exodus 19:6, where God through Moses told Israel, 'You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' The sad fact is, however, that Israel forfeited her privilege of priestly dominion because of her apostasy and rejection of the Messiah (cp. Jn. 12:37-48; Rom. 10:16-21; 11:7-10; Heb. 3:16-19). But all those who believe in Jesus as Messiah and trust in Him alone for salvation receive the privilege of become royal priests (Rev. 5:10). Two primary elements constitute the image of the *royal priesthood*. First, the priests serve the King by having access to His holy presence, into which they come offering spiritual sacrifices to Him, and second, the priests rule with the King in His kingdom. *Basileion* (*royal*) generally describes a royal residence or place (cp. Lk. 7:25). But it can also refer to a sovereignty or monarchy. Peter used the term here to convey the general ideal of royalty. The spiritual house he mentioned in verse 5 turns out to be a royal house, the dominion of a royal family. Believers are a ruling priesthood, literally 'a royal house of priests.'

Dorani: The phrase *a royal priesthood* may well be translated as 'the king's priesthood.' We are priests (2:5) who belong to the King and therefore share in Jesus' sovereign rule. We stand before God in strength as we serve and represent Him.

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Sproul: Here, Peter qualifies the priesthood in a different way. He says that we are chosen and that we are royal, that is, we serve in the presence of and under the aegis of a king. Christ is not only our King, but He is also our great High Priest, an affirmation with which people in the Jewish community struggled.... In the Old Testament, apart from Melchizedek, there was a sharp line of division between the function of the king and the function of the priest. King Uzziah reigned faithfully for decades until he took to himself the role of priest and came into the Holy Place to offer sacrifices. The priests were aghast, and they rebuked him. Uzziah exercised his wrath on the priests whereupon God struck him with leprosy and removed him from the throne, and he died in shame (2 Chr. 26). That union of priesthood and kingship was reserved for Christ, our King and our Great High Priest who intercedes for us daily at the right hand of God. The One whom God anointed King of kings is at the same time our priest.. However, this conjunction of kingship and priesthood does not finish with Jesus. Peter gives us the astonishing affirmation that in Christ we are a chosen generation and a royal priesthood. By virtue of our being in Christ, we participate in His kingdom. We participate in His priesthood as those who make intercession for the lost as well as for the people of God.

c) *Holy Nation (2:9a)*

MacArthur: Here he alludes to Exodus 19:6 ('you shall be to Me...a holy nation') when he declares that believers are separated to Christ as *a holy nation*. The word *nation* translates *ethnos*, which means 'people,' as an ethnic group (Lk. 7:5; 23:2; Jn. 11:48, 50-52; Acts 2:5; 10:22; Rev. 5:9). *Holy (hagios)* means 'separate' or 'set apart.' It was common in the Old Testament to call God's covenant people a holy nation (cp. Lev. 19:2; 20:26; Dt. 7:6; Is. 62:12).... Positional sanctification makes Christians *a holy nation* before God because His own righteousness is imputed to them. And practically, they are progressing in holiness by the work of the Spirit (cp 2 Cor. 3:18).

Dorani: God called Israel His *holy nation* in Exodus 19:6, since He had consecrated Israel for a life with Him. He ordered *physical* distinctives in food, clothing, and circumcision. These indicated and promoted Israel's *spiritual* distinctives. Israelite culture was not totally different, but it was appreciably different, and that helped to set the 'holy nation' apart from 'the nations,' that is, the pagan world.

Sproul: We are a nation that is holy, sacred, consecrated, and transcendent. We are a nation that is different from any nation that has ever appeared on this planet.... The kingdom of God is not limited to the borders of the USA. It transcends every human border. The kingdom of God is spread throughout the whole world, and the reason is that citizens in that kingdom belong to a different kind of country, a holy nation—as the Scriptures define it, a heavenly nation. Our citizenship really cannot be defined by our passports, because in this world we remain pilgrims.... We are citizens of a holy nation created by God—His own special people.

d) *A People for God's Possession (2:9a)*

MacArthur: At Sinai God promised the Israelites, 'If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples' (Ex. 19:5; cp. Dt. 7:6-7; 14:2; 26:18; Mal. 3:17). Again, that foreshadowed the truth of Peter's statement that Christians are now *a people for God's own possession*. The Greek term rendered *possession* (*peripoiēsis*) means 'to purchase,' 'to acquire for a price' (cp. Eph. 1:14). Believers belong to God because He bought them at the ultimate price (1:18-19; cp. 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Heb. 13:12; Rev. 5:9).

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Doriani: Peter also called the church *a people belonging to God*. The Greek is literally ‘a people for possession.’ The phrase is from Isaiah 43:21, where God calls Israel ‘My chosen people, the people whom I formed for Myself.’ *People* is almost a technical term for Israel in its dedication to God. This ‘possession’ is more than mere ownership. God possesses His people because He redeemed them. He exhorts them, ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine’ (Is. 43:1).

2. Purpose of the Church (2:9b)

...that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

a) Proclaim the Excellencies (2:9b)

Gardner: This calling, says Peter, has a purpose. It is *that you may declare the praises of Him...* Here is the goal of the church and of the Christian life. It is not centered in us and our well-being. It is not about finally finding satisfaction though in Christ we do find it. It is not about having wonderful fellowship in the church, though we should have it. Our final goal and greatest fulfillment in life as individuals and as God’s own called people, the church, is to bring Him glory and praise and to speak about it to those around us.

MacArthur: *Proclaim (exangeilēte)* is from a Greek word that appears only here in the New Testament. It means ‘to publish,’ or ‘advertise’ and to do so in the sense of telling something otherwise unknown. That which is generally unknown and which Peter encourages believers to publicize is *the excellencies of Christ*, the Savior. *Excellencies (aretas)* can imply the ability to perform powerful, heroic deeds. Contrary to what it might indicate in English, the term refers more to those kinds of actions than to some intrinsic royal attributes or qualities. Christians have the distinct privilege of telling the world that Christ has the power to accomplish the extraordinary work of redemption.

McKnight: Peter cites the purpose of the church as declaring *the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light*. The church as a whole is expected to announce the good tidings of peace and joy that can be found in Christ. While some have seen here a ‘worship’ understanding of ‘declare,’ it is more likely that this word should be seen along with the other instances of evangelism in 1 Peter (1;12, 25; 3:1; 4:17).

Doriani: The privileged *state* of God’s people leads to privileged *action*. Because God has redeemed us and we are His, we are heralds who *declare the praises of Him who called [us] out of darkness into His wonderful light*.

Sproul: The reason that we are a chosen generation and a royal priest and that God has conferred upon us citizenship in a heavenly, holy country is, according to Peter, this: *that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*. We have received our citizenship for the purpose of proclaiming God’s praises. To worship God is to offer Him not an animal sacrifice or a cereal offering but the sacrifice of praise. The praise of God should be on our lips every moment because citizens of this heavenly kingdom spend eternity praising the King of that heavenly nation, singing with the angels (Rev. 5:12).

b) Called Out of Darkness (2:9b)

Gardner: Of course this *holy nation* is not based on the country where this people live. It is not that are a nation in Turkey, or a people with the same language or color of skin. Rather, they

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have received God's mercy and moved, as it were, from *darkness* to live in the Lord's *wonderful light*. They have been *called* from the darkness of paganism and disobedience and stumbling into the light of the Lord. God's mercy is His calling in action. These former pagans and former Jews have joined a people from all over the world who also belong to God, a people who have looked to Jesus as their foundation and cornerstone.

MacArthur: Throughout history, the unregenerate world has faced two kinds of darkness: intellectual and moral. Intellectual darkness is ignorance—the inability to see and know the truth, whereas moral darkness is immorality—the inability to see and do what is right. The *darkness* Peter refers to here is the second type—the sinful state of unbelievers who are trapped in the spiritual darkness of Satan, the prince of darkness. Such moral darkness is pervasive in its scope and profound in its depth. Unbelievers are children born in the darkness. They not only *walk* in the darkness, they *love* the darkness.... However, Peter reminded his readers that Christ had sovereignly, powerfully, and effectually *called* them *out of darkness*. Almost always in the epistles when *kaleō* (*called*) or the related words *klēsis* and *kletos* appear they indicate God's effectual call to salvation.... That saving call is a recurring theme, close to the apostle's heart in this letter (cp. 1:1; 15; 2:1; 3:9; 5:10).

MacArthur: The positive side of Christ's calling sinners *out of darkness* is that they are also thereby called *into His marvelous light* (cp. Col. 1:13).... When believers receive Christ's light, He illuminates their minds so they can discern the truth, and He changes their souls so they are able to apply it.... They receive both the intellectual light of God's truth and the righteous desires to obey it, neither of which they had before conversion.

Sproul: The contrast between light and darkness is a common metaphor in the New Testament. Darkness is a place where no light intrudes, where deeds of evil are conceived and carried out. The Bible tells us that we are by nature the children of darkness. Darkness is our natural habitat. In our fallen condition, we feared more than anything else that a search light would be placed on our souls and that our sins would be made manifest to the world (cp. Jn. 3:16-21).... When our deeds are placed in the light, they are exposed for the wickedness that motivates them, which is lived ought in darkness, our natural habitat. Our natural disposition toward God is indisposition. We have a built-in allergy to the things of God. Our natural disposition is not to seek Him but to flee from Him.... Peter says, however, that God has called us out of the darkness into the light.... We come out of darkness only when God effectually calls us out, when God brings His light to us.... He has called us out of darkness not simply into light but into *His* light, and even beyond that, into His *marvelous* light. It is a marvel when God displays His light into the darkness of a human soul. Words cannot express the wonder of being brought out of the darkness into His light.

3. People of the Church (2:10)

¹⁰*Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

Gardner: This is God's salvation in action. This is all about His mercy to an underserving people. Peter turns to Hosea to fill out the wonder of this gospel message. Israel had rejected God and had not been God's people. They lived under judgment, yet the prophet also foresaw God's mercy and how people would be forgiven and become God's people again. God's mercy and salvation had been seen in Israel, so Peter sees a parallel with the Christians to whom he writes. They had once not believed. They had at one time not received mercy. They had not

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belonged as a people to God, but now they are God's. Now they belong. Now they have received mercy.

MacArthur: Peter drew an analogy from the prophet Hoses when he introduced the next spiritual privilege for believers, compassion from Christ (cp. Hos. 1:6-10)... In principle, Peter applied to the church—particularly to its Gentile members—the prophet's words concerning the Jews (cp. Hos. 2:23; Rom. 9:22-26). As unbelievers, the Gentiles knew no compassion from Christ—they *once were not a people*. But now they had become the *people of God*, because they had *received His mercy*. *Mercy* is synonymous with compassion and essentially involves God's sympathy with sinners' misery and His withholding from them the just punishment for their sins.

McKnight: Peter appropriates the story of Hosea for the church, except that here *not a people* and *had not received mercy* describe their pagan past, while in Hosea these phrases describe God's judgment of Israel for their disobedience.

Dorani: It is striking that Peter calls Gentile converts a 'people' and 'a holy nation.' These were labels that had *distinguished Israel from the Gentiles*. Now Peter applies the same labels *to the Gentiles*. They had practiced a pagan polytheism that Peter calls 'the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers.' For them, debauchery, carousing, and idolatry were so common that it seemed strange when anyone departed from them (1:18; 4:3-4). But things have changed: *Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy*. Let the contrasts resonate: once darkness, now light; once alone, now in God's family; once awaiting judgment, now receiving mercy.

Sproul: Peter must have in mind the story of the prophet Hosea, who was called of God to marry a woman of harlotry. The children she bore were given names significant of God's judgment on His people (Hos. 1:3-9)... Every Jew knew that story, so when Peter tells them, 'You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people,' they would have understood that they, a people who were once Lo-Ammi, not a people, had become the people of God. Those who were called Lo-Ruhamah, who had not obtained mercy, have now obtained mercy. That is what God has done for us. He has called us out of darkness to be His people and the vessels of His mercy. What a destiny.

We see that 1 Peter 2:4-10 is filled with quotations and allusions to the Old Testament. This shows that Peter assumes that his people, former polytheists and largely illiterate, will know key Old Testament terms and promises. It is now *their* book, their story and rule. Since no ordinary person in that day could dream of owning a copy of Scripture, this knowledge came in one way: by coming to church and listening as leaders read the Law and the Prophets. If Peter expected his new converts to gain this knowledge of Scripture, how much more should we lay hold of it.

For next time: Read 1 Peter 2:11-17.

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Lesson Summary

V. Living Stones (1 Peter 2:4-10)

Aim: To recognize that the church of Jesus Christ is the New Testament people of God and the heir of all the privileges, promises, and position of Old Testament Israel.

A. A Spiritual House (2:4-5)

Verses 4-5 introduce the images of the living stone and the holy/royal priesthood that are the main subjects of the next two sections, which further amplify this introduction. As a whole, the passage shows us Christ and the two responses to Him: either being built up into a spiritual house as the new Israel, or being crushed by the stone that was rejected.

1. Living Stone (2:4-5a)

- We come to Jesus for fellowship and community
- Jesus is the living Stone (*lithos*); cp. Dt. 32:3-4, 31; 1 Pe. 2:8; 1 Cor. 10:4)
- Jesus was rejected by men (*apodedokimasmenon*, ‘rejected having been examined or tested’); Jesus applied Ps. 118:22 to Himself in Mt. 21:42 (cp. Acts 4:11)
- Jesus is *chosen* (*eklekton*) and *precious* (*entimon*) to God (Is, 28:16; cp. 1 Pe. 2:6)
- Our union with Jesus makes us *living stones*, being built up into a house (Eph. 2:20-22; Heb. 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:15))
- Peter uses the metaphor of *a spiritual house* to describe the covenant community
- The temple as God’s dwelling place has been replaced by the church (people); cp. 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 6:16

2. Holy Priesthood (2:5b)

- The church is also a *holy* and *royal* (v. 9) *priesthood* – priesthood of all believers
- Our priestly service is to *offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*, which includes our worship, praise, prayer, and lives (cp. Rom. 12:1-2)

B. A Precious Stone (2:6-8)

Verses 6-8 use the OT to further describe Christ as the precious and rejected cornerstone and outline the two responses to Him.

1. The Precious Cornerstone (2:6-7a)

- Is. 28:16 is quoted; Jesus is the precious cornerstone God lays in Zion
- The cornerstone is the most important stone in the building’s foundation; it sets the angles and direction of the entire structure
- Jesus is the cornerstone of the spiritual house, the church
- *Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame*
- the stone is precious because it provides the solid and sure foundation on which those who are born again are built up into the people God would have them become
- Not only will they not be rejected/shamed, but God will honor them

2. The Rejected Cornerstone (2:7b-8)

- Ps. 118:22 is quoted; those who do not believe in Jesus have rejected the cornerstone
- Is. 8:14; further, the rejected cornerstone (Jesus) becomes a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense (*skandalon*)
- Jesus is the one upon whom unbelievers stumble and fall, and He is the stone that will crush them because of unbelief (cp. Mt. 21:42-44; cp. 1 Cor. 1:22-23)
- The stumbling of unbelievers is (pre)-destined by God; election/reprobation are two sides of God’s sovereign decrees (see WCF III.5 & 7)

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C. A Royal Priesthood (2:9-10)

In verses 9-10, Peter returns to the description of the church, those who believe in the living Stone and are not put to shame but honored. In doing so, he heaps reference after reference from the OT onto the Gentiles of the NT church, confirming their position as the single people of God and the heirs of all the OT promises made to Israel.

1. Privileges of the Church (2:9a)

- *Chosen race*: from Is. 43:20-21 (cp. Dt. 7:6-9); church is chosen, elected by God
- *Royal priesthood*: from Ex. 19:5-6; priests who rule, just like Jesus; kings and priests were strictly separate in the OT, but come together in Christ and His people
- *Holy nation*: from Ex. 19:5-6; *hagios* – sanctified, set apart for service; *ethnos* – people; ironic that the Gentiles are now God's 'nation,' not Israel
- *People for God's possession*: from Is. 43:20-21 (cp. Ex. 19:5-6); 'possession' refers to purchase or redemption (cp. Is. 43:1)

2. Purpose of the Church (2:9b)

- The church has been called out, chosen, and built up to *proclaim the excellencies* of God – refers both to worship and evangelism
- We have been *called...out of darkness into His marvelous light*; another metaphor Peter uses of our redemption/salvation

2. People of the Church (2:10)

- Verse 10 is based on Hosea 1 & 2; Hosea marries a prostitute (Gomer) who gives him children with significant names: *Lo-Ruhamah* ('no mercy') and *Lo-Ammi* ('not My people')
- In Hosea, these names signified that God's people who once had received mercy would no longer be his people or receive mercy – Assyrian/Babylonian captivity
- Hos. 1:10; 2:23 promise a restoration of God's mercy and His people
- Peter applies these promises to the Gentile church, who were formerly not His people (they were far off – Eph. 2:11-13) have been brought near and made His people; those who formerly had not received mercy have now received the mercy of God

In 2:4-10, Peter heaps up the quotations and allusions to the Old Testament to demonstrate beyond doubt that an individual's response to Jesus determines their destiny, not the cultural/religious distinctions of the old covenant. The Old Testament portrays Jesus as a living stone, a precious cornerstone (Is. 28:16; Ps. 118:22), upon whom the people of God are built up as living stones into a spiritual house. The physical temple has given way to a spiritual body of believers. Likewise, the Levitical priesthood has given way to the royal priesthood of all believers. There are two responses to the living Stone of Jesus Christ. To those who do not believe and reject Him, He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense (Is. 8:14) who will crush them in judgment. These have been predestined to approbation. To those who believe in Him, those who are elect and chosen by God for salvation, they will become the New Israel of God, the NT church, who inherit all the privileges, promises, and position of OT Israel. They are now a chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, a people for God's own possession (cp. Is. 43:20-21; Ex. 19:5-6), a people of God who have obtained mercy (Hos. 1:10; 2:23), being saved out of the darkness of sin into the marvelous light of His gospel. Thus, Peter uses quotations and allusions from all three sections of the Old Testament, the Law (Ex. 19), the Prophets (Is. 8; 26; 43; Hos. 1; 2), and the Writings (Ps. 118:22) to demonstrate that everyone who responds to Jesus Christ in faith is part of the community of the church and heirs to the promises made to Israel.