

1 Peter 2:4-10

For the Jews, this is a transition time from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. Everything Peter is telling them is new news. It is revolutionary. It changes the way they have been interacting with God for the last 1500 years or so. Imagine their reaction as Peter paints several word pictures of their new relationship with Jesus Christ.

What are some of the ways Jesus is described (v. 4)? A living Stone, precious, chosen, rejected. To the Jewish readers, the concept of Jesus as a stone or rock should have been a familiar image. Jesus is the cornerstone of [Psalm 118](#); the stumbling stone of [Isaiah 8](#); the foundation stone of [Isaiah 28](#); the supernatural stone of [Daniel 2](#); and the rock that gave Israel water in the wilderness of [1 Corinthians 10:4](#).

What are some of the terms Peter uses to describe his Christian readers (v. 5, 9)? Living stones, spiritual house, holy priesthood, chosen people, holy nation, a people belonging to God -- a corporate concept -- they are now the church, i.e. the body of Christ.

What does he mean by a spiritual house (v. 5)? The body of believers, the church -- not a building.

What are the stones for this new "building?" A mix of Jewish and Gentile Christians. This spiritual house shows that as much as Israel had a temple, Christians also have one. But the Christian's temple is spiritual, and they themselves are the temple. What a radical thought for the people of that day!

What does Peter mean when he describes them as a "holy priesthood" (v. 5)? He is talking about the New Testament concept of the "Priesthood of all Believers" ([Revelation 1:6](#); [5:10](#)). We are all priests. The believer is his own priest before God. There is no longer an elite priesthood with claims of special access to God, or special privileges in worship or in fellowship with God. The believer does not need a mediator except his great High Priest Jesus Christ, who has offered up the perfect sacrifice for the entire world and has replaced the priest of the Old Testament. [1 Timothy 2:5](#) *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

God's original purpose for Israel was that she be a nation of priests ([Exodus 19:6](#)) who would stand between God and the rest of humanity representing people before God. However, God withdrew this blessing from the whole nation because of the Israelites' apostasy with the golden calf and gave it to the faithful tribe of Levi instead ([Numbers 3:12-13, 45](#); [8:14](#); [Exodus 13:2](#); [32:25-29](#)). In contrast, instead of a tribe of priests, every individual Christian is now a priest before God. We function as priests to the extent that we worship, intercede, and minister ([v. 5](#); [Revelation 1:6](#)). There is no separate priestly class in the church as there was in Israel.¹

What was the singular event which eliminated the need for a priest? The innermost court of the temple in Jerusalem was known as the Holy of Holies or the Most Holy Place. It was God's special dwelling place in the midst of His people. A thick curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple. Only the high priest was permitted to pass beyond this curtain once each year ([Exodus 30:10](#); [Hebrews 9:7](#)) to enter into the Holy of Holies (i.e. God's presence) and make atonement for the sins of all Israel ([Leviticus 16](#)). Essentially, the curtain was shielding a holy God from sinful man.

However, Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross changed all that. When Jesus died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, the curtain in the Jerusalem temple was torn in half, from the top to the bottom. As the curtain was torn, the Holy of Holies was exposed. God's presence was now accessible to all. The ultimate sin offering had been sacrificed. God was saying, "You no longer are on the outside. You can come in. My Son has made a way for you." We no longer need an earthly priest as a mediator. What a change to the concept of the priesthood. The High Priest is out of a job. The age of animal sacrificial offerings was over.

Since we are all priests (v. 5), what is our job? The Old Testament priest offered up animal sacrifices to God but we offer spiritual sacrifices.

What are some examples of spiritual sacrifices that we can offer?

- [Romans 12:1](#) -- we are to present (offer) our bodies as a living sacrifice
- [Philippians 2:17](#) -- a sacrificial offering of our faith,
- [Philippians 4:18](#) -- an offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

- Hebrews 13:1 -- a spiritual sacrifice of praise.

Above all, believers can be confident that God will accept their sacrifice because of Christ's presence in our lives. My sacrifices are not acceptable because I am good.

What is a cornerstone (v. 6)? The one essential stone on which the integrity of the whole building depends... the starting point of a building...the main stone on which the building rests. The cornerstone of a foundation joins the walls together. If the cornerstone should fail, the whole structure is doomed to fail.

Who is the Cornerstone? Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the Church in which Jews and Gentiles are joined together as a habitation for God. He is the cornerstone because He is the glory, the crown, and the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.

Ephesians 2:19-21 *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.*

1 Corinthians 3:11 *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

The church is clearly founded on Jesus Christ!

Why was Jesus "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall" (v. 8)? The plan of God was for both Jew and Gentile to be joined together into one glorious house for God. Sadly, the stone (Jesus) which should have been the most precious gem of their lives was rejected and has now become "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." Men either bow before Him in repentance and faith leading to salvation or stumble over him into hell. There can be no neutrality; He must be either savior or judge.²

The only true freedom any man or woman has in this life is the freedom to choose who their master will be. Not to choose is to choose against Christ. And if one chooses against Christ, the inevitable consequence is that they are then "destined" to stumble because they disobeyed the message. This is why a person's theology is not dictated by their intellect but by their willingness to obey.

Verse 8b illustrates the Biblical tension between (1) the responsibility (free will) of man and (2) the sovereignty of God. Man stumbles to his own destruction because of his unbelief. The Bible always places the responsibility for the destiny of the lost on them for not believing rather than on God for foreordaining (John 1:12; 3:36; 5:24; 6:47; Romans 1—3).³

What was the message to the people (vv. 9-10)? You are a chosen people. Just as Israel was chosen by God, so is the church. The things that once exclusively belonged to Israel: (1) their election (they were chosen), (2) they were a royal priesthood, (3) a holy nation, (4) a people belonging to God.....these things are now no longer the property of Israel alone. These are now the property of every Christian. It was God's intention that Israel be a nation that was distinguished by these privileges. But the Israelites stooped to the sinful practices of their gentile neighbors. So Israel has been set aside temporarily and the church now enjoys these privileges (Romans 11:25).

Why are we chosen (v. 9)? To glorify God. "*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*"

What is the message of v. 10? Remember where you came from. Remember the way it used to be. We once were people of the world but now we are people of God. We once were without these privileges and were not even a people before God. We had not seen the mercy of God, but now we have obtained mercy. We all have a before and after picture to appreciate and declare. The way we live our lives should demonstrate the result of being called out of darkness into His marvelous light which is one of the key features of being effective in sharing Christ with unbelievers.

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Peter, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>)

² Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), pp 2260

³ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Peter, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>)