

“We Are Like Stones”

1 Peter 2:4-10

1. Jesus is the Precious Cornerstone (2:4, 6-8)

- A. Peter describes Jesus as a “living stone” that was rejected by men (2:4).
- B. Jesus is the “rejected stone” that becomes the chief stone in a New Temple (2:6-8)
 - 1. Peter draws several verses from the Hebrew Bible together in this paragraph. He first quotes Isa 28:16, where the Lord says he is “laying a stone in Zion.” In the original context, this saying referred to the establishment of a stable dynasty in Jerusalem, despite threats against it from the Assyrians.
 - A. Does the stone refer to the capstone, the stone with the most glory, or the foundational stone, on which the building is built?
 - B. An additional problem is that the in a metaphor of the people of God as a Temple in the present age, Jesus can be described as both the foundation and capstone. Eph 2:20 has a very similar use of this particular word and the same problem is present there.
 - 2. The second verse Peter quotes is from Psalm 118:22-23. The idea of a chief stone connects the Psalm to Isa 28:16.
 - A. Jesus called himself the “stone that the builders rejected” after the Parable of the Vineyard in Mark 12:9-11.
 - B. In the Gospels, Jesus quotes Psalm 118 as a conclusion to the parable of the Vineyard, which concludes with the son of the vineyard’s owner being taken out of the vineyard and killed.
 - C. In Mark, when the stone is exalted to the highest place (as a capstone), Jesus refers to his resurrection and ascension.
 - 3. The third text Peter quotes is Isa. 8:14. In response to the rejection of the stone, judgment will come.
 - A. In the original context of Isaiah 8, God has given the sign of Immanuel (a son, *ben*) to king Ahaz, and now Isaiah is warned to honor only the Lord as holy and to only fear the Lord (rather than the king).
 - B. It is easy enough to connect sanctuary with temple, but the image of what kind of stone Jesus is changes here - he is no longer an honored stone at the highest point in the Temple; rather he is a stone on the ground that trips people up and causes them to stumble.
 - C. Those who honor Jesus will be honored, those who do not will be shamed. This refers to eschatological judgment (Rom 9:33, 10:11)
 - 4. In the present age, Peter says, there are some will believe in the cornerstone, and be honored ‘in that day,’ while those who reject the stone will be shamed.
- C. In summary, Peter describes Jesus in this passage as the most important stone in a Temple. If Jesus is the cornerstone or capstone, then the people of God are stones building on that foundation.

2. Believers are Stones Building the Temple of the Spirit (2:5, 9-10)

- A. If Jesus is the cornerstone, then the believers are the stones that are laid on that stone in order to build up a Temple.
 1. Peter compares the people of God to the stones that make up a “spiritual house.” If Jesus is like the chief cornerstone (in some ways like the foundation and in other ways like the capstone), then those who are in Christ are the other components of that building.
 2. The describes God’s people with Temple language in verse five:
 - A. **The people of God are a “spiritual house.”**
 - There are several well-known critiques of the Temple, including the Temple Action by Jesus just before his crucifixion.
 - Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 is often seen as critical of the Temple and the aristocratic priesthood.
 - B. In the same way, the original readers would have understood “holy priesthood” in the light of the Temple. In fact, the priests were the only ones who permitted to offer sacrifices at the temple.
 - C. The believer is superior to the Temple priest because they are able to bring “acceptable sacrifice to God” because they are offering them “through Jesus.”
 3. All of this language sounds like Peter is describing the present people of God as a kind of New Israel, but it is not the case that Peter is saying that the present Church (the Body of Christ) replaces the old Israel. For a Jewish writer and reader this new priesthood and temple service replaces the old one that was ineffective. The believers in Asia Minor in the first century are now all priests that are capable of offering acceptable sacrifices to God.
- B. Peter describes the readers as:
 1. A people “chosen by God (Deut 10:14-15, Isa 43:20).
 2. A “royal priesthood” and “holy nation” (Exod 19:6).
 3. God’s own possession (Mal 3:17).
 4. All of these phrases are descriptions of the “ideal Israel” from the Old Testament.
- C. The Believers were:
 1. “In the dark” is a common way of describing people before they come to faith in Jesus.
 2. Prior to coming to Christ, the readers were “not a people” and not “not receiving mercy.”
 3. The one who has been born again is therefore in a very special place before God. They are able to worship God properly. Where the Law and Temple worship never quite succeeded, the believers are able to render acceptable sacrifices before God, through Jesus Christ.