

The True People of God
1 Peter 2:4-10

I don't know if you've ever played that icebreaker word association game before? Someone says a word and then everyone is supposed to honestly say what comes to mind first? (Feel free to play along at home)

- “Car” — a favorite, one you want, one that you used to have
- “Yankees” — baseball, Babe Ruth, evil empire, northerners
- “MichaelAngelo” - Artist, architect, Ninja Turtle
- “Benjamin” - Franklin, Dollars, Wig
- “Tiger” - Animal, Woods, King, LSU

- “Temple” — Jerusalem, Solomon, Pillars, Granite
- “Priests” — Robes, Religious leader, Sacrifices
- “Stones” — Rolling, Weed, Flintstones...

Prior to the New Covenant, it would be rare to find someone saying “God’s people” as “temple” or as “Stones” or as “Priests.” But Peter does.

- He uses some of these OT images and applies them to believers in Jesus.
- Peter applies the honors and titles and responsibilities of Israel to the new covenant people of God, the church of Christ.

This text is all about the identity of Jesus and the identity of His people.

- Our identity is tied to his identity.
- It’s one of the most significant and encouraging passages on the identity of the people of God in Scripture.

The identity question is huge today: many based identity on looks or performance or background or interest.

- But our identity is defined by our relationship to Christ.
- And our identity is communal, not individualistic.
- And our identity is missional.

The church is the continuation and maturation of the believing remnant from the old covenant.

“The church does not replace Israel, but it does fulfill the promises made to Israel; and all those, Jews and Gentiles, who belong to the true Israel are now part of the new people of God.” (Schreiner)

This text answers three **massive** questions: (1) Who is Jesus? (2) Who Are We? (3) What’s our purpose?

#1: Who Is Jesus? (2:4-8)

There’s a great division on this question: some reject him as Messiah (he’s the cast-away stone or the stumbling stone), others receive him as most valuable and glorious..

- Some stumble over Jesus as they find him offensive.
- Others find him as precious, most valuable; we take God the Father's view him.

4: This paragraph is linked to the previous by the pronoun "**him**"

- "**Him**" refers to "**the Lord**" (Jesus) in verse 3.

"Coming to Jesus" is a way of speaking conversion.

- Have you come to him?
- Jesus said "Come to me, all who labor..."
- Peter is saying you don't go to Jerusalem, you don't go to a temple, you go to Jesus. He is central.

"Living stone" is a strange expression because we know that stones by nature are **lifeless**.

- Peter has already told us about our *living hope*.
- He has also spoken of the *Word as "living."*
- *Here Jesus is "living." He is alive – as the risen and reigning and returning Christ.*
- Stott speaks of the relevance of Christ saying, "The one we preach is not Christ-in-a-vacuum, nor a mystical Christ unrelated to the real world, nor even only the Jesus of ancient history, but rather the contemporary Christ who once lived and died, and now lives to meet human need in all its variety today."
- He lives now. He is at work now. The Living Stone.
- And the way you have life is by being united to him.

"Rejected by Men" — Many prefer darkness

- Jesus knows rejection; he knows mockery; he knows sorrow; he knows injustice.

4b: Even though some "reject" Jesus (2:6-8), he is "**chosen and precious**" in the sight of God (Isa 28:16).

- The Father delights in the Son, ("in whom I am well pleased")
- We too are called to prize him above all,
- "**The closer you look, the better we look**" (Ford Motor, 1970). The closer we look at Jesus, the better he looks.

5: Living Stones: Now, the church is "**living**" because we are united to Jesus.

- We are united to Jesus, and his resurrection life is ours. We have life in him.
- The church is a vibrant community, an ever-increasing building as more people are converted.
 - Every time one believes in Jesus, it's like another stone it fitted into this house.
 - Cf., **Eph 2:19-22**

5b: Peter shifts the imagery to say that we are not only this spiritual temple, but we're also a "**holy priesthood**," a statement he makes later (v. 9).

- Who me a priest? Yes!
- Maybe you grew up in certain religious traditions, and when you hear that word you think of a holy guy in a robe!

- **New Orleans: “Let’s go father. Does it feel good to get your robe off? “I’ve never seen a blankety blank shortstop...”**

But the priesthood of believers mean that all of us do ministry.

This simply means doing things that “please God.”

- We can **offer ourselves up to God in worship** as we **serve** others. (**Rom 12:1-2; Heb 13.15-16; 1 Pet 4:7ff**)
- We can take God to **people in evangelism**; and **people to God in prayer**.
 - **As we pour ourselves out for others, in the cause of justice and mercy, honoring everyone made in God’s image (2:17), we do so as a pleasing aroma to God.**
 - **As we listen to the hurting, we give care as priests. “Behold I saw the tears of the oppressed, and there was no one to comfort them” (Eccl 4)**
 - **As we do the work of peacemaking, we do so to God’s glory as an act of worship.**

Our sacrifices are “spiritual” as opposed to the priestly sacrifices in the Old Covenant which consisted of offering physical bulls and goats, and so on.

5c: Who makes this possible? Jesus. The final sacrifice, and great high priest.

- What makes our offerings acceptable is that they come **“through Jesus Christ.”**
- On the basis of his atoning sacrifice, we offer our worship and our lives to God.
- **All of life is now an opportunity for worship.**

This was important for Peter’s context, as Christians were being marginalized.

Regardless of how and where they were, they could worship God; they could pray; they could serve; they could speak.

6-8: Peter pulls together some OT texts to describe the uniqueness of Jesus and how a dividing line is drawn by whether or not one believes on him or rejects him.

(Isa 28:16; Ps 118:22; Isa 8:14)

6: “God is laying a stone” – he is doing it. (Cf, Isa 28).

- Isaiah 28 is about judgement on Ephraim for their disobedience and unbelief, **but also about how those who trust in the Lord will escape judgment.**
- Isaiah exhorted the people to **not trust in foreign alliances or military strength** (“horses and chariots” and “Egypt”; Isaiah 30–31), but to only trust the Lord. If they do, they’ll triumph.
- **Similarly, Peter’s audience: trust in the Lord Jesus Christ; and you will escape judgement and be honored.**

6: “chosen and precious” is the same phrase as verse 4, again describing Jesus.

“Cornerstone” — a beautiful image of Christ.

Stones. We live in a country that’s not very old. We think Radio Shack is old.

- **But if you’ve been overseas you find that buildings are made of Stone, homes, streets, etc. I was in Turkey last year and these ancient ruins are filled with them. Some of these structures are standing!**

- Peter's audience knew the importance of a good cornerstone.
 - You would pick the best, most solid, dependable stone you could find.
 - You would lay it down first.
 - Everything would rest upon it, and it would give shape and alignment to the other stones.
- The point: Build your whole life on Jesus. We build the church on Jesus.
 - Others prefer to build their lives on something else: money, fame, sex, work.
 - **But** only Jesus can carry the load.
- Jesus is not to be a brick in the wall, but most important, the **cornerstone**.
- Is Jesus your cornerstone?
- **See this: If you get Jesus right, you get your identity right; and if you get your identity right, then you community right, you get your mission right.**
- If you get Jesus wrong, and reject him, finding him offensive or unattractive, you will stumble and fall – now and forever. (v. 8).

6b-7: Faith in Jesus is elevated in this verse. For those that believe, you will be **honored**.

6b: You will **not be put to shame** (which was happening)

7-8: Rejected; a rock of offense

Some today may say, "I like Jesus' teaching on the poor, and how he loved children, but I don't think he was the Son of God. I don't believe that he rose from the dead, so on."

- Some just see him as a humble, Galilean peasant; a radical religious teacher who went around teaching, or something like that.
- There are all kind of views of Jesus.
 - The Jesus of Pop Culture
 - Jesus is my home boy t-shirts
 - He appears on Simpsons, South Park, Major League, Talledaga nights... DaVinci Code
 - Bands with songs Jesus Take the Wheel (Carrie Underwood); Depech Mode used to sing to "my personal Jesus"
 - John Lennon said of the Beatles "We're more popular than Jesus"
 - Jesus of the Cults
 - Jesus is Good but not God; or a man who became a god
 - Deepak Chopra, "I See Christ as a state of consciousness we can all aspire to"
 - **Scientology:** "Jesus is an implant forced upon a Thetan about a million years ago" – *Vintage Jesus (Whatever that means)*
 - Jesus of religions
 - He's merely a prophet or an enlightened man like Buddha
 - Jesus of the Skeptics
 - Robert Funk: Jesus was witty teacher like Buddah or Socrates.
 - J.D. Crossan: Jesus was a wandering philosopher
 - M. Borg: Jesus was a charismatic faith healer.
 - Bart Ehrman: Jesus was a first century apocalyptic prophet, who expected the end of his world.
 - Jesus in One's Image

- Susan Haskins: “Jesus was a feminist.”
- Gorbachev: “Jesus was the first socialist.” (Gorbachev)
- Rollo May: “Christ is the therapist for all humanity.” (Rollo May)

7 // Ps 118:22: Many reject the biblical Jesus; they stumble over him.

- They reject the sinless Savior who died an atoning death, rose from the dead and grants forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe; the one who is coming again in power and glory.
- In Psalm 118, the rejected Stone was the Davidic king; the builders were the surrounding nations that rejected his rule. And they were assured of their destruction.
- Both Jesus and Peter (Matt 21:42; Acts 4:11) used the psalm in an unsuspected way. The builders who reject the anointed king are not foreigners but Israel’s religious leaders.

8/Isaiah 8: Many are offended by him.

- Isaiah 8, Israel and Judah are called upon to fear and trust the Lord rather than fear other nations. (Peter also alluded to Isa 8:12 in 1 Pet 3:14). In Isaiah 8, the holy God, who is not only the **sanctuary**, but also the **snare/stumbling block** for those who do not fear him.
- The churches in Asia Minor were tempted to fear the outside world, but they were to trust in God.

8b: The rejection of the cornerstone is tragic, but it did not catch God by surprise.

- Again, Peter emphasis both human responsibility and divine sovereignty;
- Here the emphasis is on God’s sovereignty, which he underscores in order to encourage these oppressed Christians

In Acts 4, Peter cites **Ps 118:22** (Acts 4:11) and then says “there is salvation in no one else...” (Acts 4:12)

- Everyone must respond to Jesus, and those who believe on him join the people of God.
- **Everything hinges on Jesus, the living stone, the cornerstone.**
- **What will you do with him?**
- **John Stott speaks of his own conversion when he was sixteen. A man named EJH Nash was speaking at a camp Stott was attending.**
 - Stott later said, “He was nothing to look at, and certainly no ambassador for muscular Christianity. Yet as he spoke I was riveted.”
 - He confronted the boys with the question posed by Pilate, “What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?” Making it clear that that neutrality was not an option.
 - “In a way I cannot express” recalled Stott, “I was bowled over by this because it was an entirely new concept that one had to do anything with Jesus.”
 - He later wrote, “I used to think that because Jesus has died on the cross, by some kind of rather mechanical transaction the whole world had been put right with God. I remember how puzzled, even indignant, I was when it was first suggested to me that I needed to appropriate Christ and his salvation for myself.

I thank God that later he opened my eyes to see that I must do more than acknowledge I needed a Savior, more even than acknowledge that Jesus Christ as *the* Savior I needed; it was necessary to accept him as *my* Savior.”

- Have you done this? Have you trusted him as your Savior.

#2: Who Are We? (2:9-10)

Peter's focus is not on our individual identity here, but on our corporate identity.

Having already told us that we are living stones and a holy priesthood, Peter develops his thought on the identity of God's people further in these verses.

He tells us five truths about the people of God.

9: “But you” emphasizes that the people of God are different from those who disobey the gospel.

- What follows are OT descriptions of the people of God, now applied to the church. (Ex 19:5-6; Deut 7:6, 14:2, Isa 43:20-21; Hos 2:23; Ti 2:14)
- These titles are privileges.

A. We are a chosen race (cf., Isa 43:3, 20-21)

- This race is composed of every person from all ethnicities who have believed on Jesus.
- We are a spiritual race, united in Christ.
 - This doesn't mean race, ethnicity, people-group differences don't matter.
 - It means we are united by one great trait: we see Christ as precious and glorious.
- We have been chosen to be this race – not for good in us, but by God's mercy and grace.

B. We are a royal priesthood

- We are “royal” because we belong to the royal King, Jesus.
- We are a priesthood who offer spiritual sacrifices to God, and who bring blessing to the world.
- **Revelation 1:5-6/5:9-10** reminds us that there's an already-not yet reality to this status – we worship and serve God now, and will do so in the new creation to come later.

C. We are a holy nation.

- We are a unique blessed people, a nation – made up of believers from among the nations.
- A holy people group.
- **Holy – Positional/Practical.**

D. We are a people for God's own possession.

- God owns everything, but through Christ, he has a special possession in the church.
- It's always fascinating to see what someone will pay for a particular possession of a famous person.
 - **Napoleon's toothbrush supposedly sold for \$21,000. Hitler's car for \$150K... JFK's golf clubs for \$772K**
- Think of the value of something owned by God!

- **But Peter says you are God's possession. We belong to him.**
- **What incredible worth that bestows on us, what dignity.**
- **The price paid for us was unimaginably high: the blood of Jesus.**

E. We have received mercy (2:10)

- Peter here adapts and **applies the story of Hosea and Gomer to the church.**
- **Hosea represented God; Gomer Israel.**
- **God told Hosea to give his children specific names, as a way to teach Israel lessons.**
 - The firstborn was **Jezeel** ("God scatters"), pointing to coming judgment.
 - The second was **Lo-ruhama** ("not pitied/ no mercy").
 - The third was **Lo-ammi** ("not my people").
- **But the Lord graciously transforms the threats in these names.**
- **God declares that he will call not my people, "my people" and "no mercy" one's who receive mercy.**
- It's a picture of **redemptive love.**
- As **unbelievers** were those who were "not God's people" and those who had "not received mercy" – **but through belief in Christ, everything has changed!**

Church, we are God's people and we have received mercy!

Whenever you're discouraged, come back to these ideas.

- **Maybe that's today.**
- **This is your identity: chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, God's possession, recipients of mercy.**
- **I am not my bank account; I am not my performance; I am not my vocation; I am not what peers think of me; I am who God says I am!**

#3: What's Our Purpose? (2:9)

God saved us to be a **worshiper** and **witness**.

We have a missional identity.

Notice that "**so that**" – this is the **purpose** of this identity change.

"excellences" (praises, CSB)– This speaks of God's attributes, of his virtues, and his beauty; as well as his actions through Jesus Christ.

- In Isaiah 43, God reassures his people that he will restore them from exile, for his glory. And he says this in **Isa 43:1, 10, 19-21**).
- Likewise, we have been redeemed to declare his praise.

"called us out of darkness into his marvelous light."

- Conversion - darkness to light (Acts 26:18; 2 Cor 4:6; Eph 5:8; 1 Thess 5:4, 5, 8)
- Darkness refers to unbelief; of being blind to the beauty of Jesus, the chosen and previous one.
- Marvelous light – we have new life, new sight, new tastes and loves.

- We live in the day of electrical lighting, so we don't have the same experiences as these readers; but if you're camping in the middle of nowhere, you know **how dark darkness can get**. You appreciate the light when you need it.

Proclaim His Excellencies

- This is God-Centered. Tell of his wonders!
- We love to tell of wonders
 - **The wonders of Sports (MVP, Best team)**
 - **The wonders of restaurant or food (anyone do that this week?)**
 - **The wonders of Netflix shows**
 - **The wonders of our job**
 - **The wonders of exercise or therapy**
- **God is looking for someone who will talk about the wonders of his salvation!**
- **Declare His glory among the nations" (Ps 96)**

How? Live as a missionary.

- **Eat with non-Christians.**
- **Walk your neighborhood. Take interest in your neighbors and asks questions.**
- **Be a regular.**
- **Hobby w/ non-Christians.**
- **Talk to your co-workers.**
- **Volunteer at various organizations.**
- **Participate in events in the city.**
- **Do something kind for someone in your neighborhood, as one who has tasted and seen that the Lord is good. .**

Why? We want people to meet Jesus. We want them to worship Jesus!

We want more living stones being added to this holy temple!

The identity of Jesus: The Living Stone, the Cornerstone. Get him right.

Our Identity: Living Stones, A holy priesthood, etc.

Our missional identity: proclaim his excellencies.

Rev 5.9-10.