

# A LIVING TEMPLE

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1 Peter 2:4-10

## Introduction:

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” That’s a question we sometimes ask children. You can get some pretty strange answers ...a dog ...black Spiderman ...a ninja chef. One little boy answered by saying he wanted to be a grave digger. I don’t know about you, but sometimes I’m still not sure what I want to be when I grow up.

In our text today, we are going to be looking at what we are to be growing into as we grow spiritually. Peter tells us that because of our relationship with Jesus Christ, we are to be growing into a people who are different and distinct from the world – holy and blameless—a living, holy temple—a dwelling place for God – see vv. 9-10.

This thought is carried over from chapter 1, where we were introduced to this call to a holy life – read 1 Peter 1:14-16. In a previous message, we looked at two concepts related to this call to holiness.

Fearing our heavenly Father (v. 17b) – having a healthy respect and a reverent fear of God because of his holiness. Peter mentioned three things that ought to induce in us a healthy level of fear and respect for his awesome power and holiness. We conduct ourselves in fear...

- In light of his judgment – v. 17
- In view of our redemption – vv. 18-19
- In consideration of His foreknowledge and choosing – vv. 20-21

Obedying His enduring Word – our holiness is a response to the holiness and judgment of our heavenly Father, but it is also the result of obedience to His mighty, powerful and enduring Word.

- Our new birth is the result of an imperishable seed – vv. 22-25
- Our new life is governed by a desire for His Word – 2:1-3

Summary of that message - We will only really be able to follow the path of holiness when we begin to fear our Heavenly Father and obey His eternal Word.

Now, in today’s text, Peter goes on to expand that thought as he looks at what God has called us to be – a holy people, a temple designed to be a dwelling place for God by His Spirit. I want to look at this passage in three parts today:

- vv. 4-6 – the living stone and the believer
- vv. 7-8 – the living stone and the unbeliever
- vv. 9-10 – the believer’s role in God’s plan

## The Living Stone and the Believer vv. 4-6

Read v. 4 – who is the one to whom we come—for salvation, for strength, for daily sustenance, for hope, for everything? It is to **Him, the living stone...**

Peter was certainly very familiar with the imagery of a stone or rock. When he met Jesus for the first time, Jesus did something interesting. He changed his name. In John 1 we find the account of Andrew bringing his brother Simon to Jesus to introduce him to the Messiah. Jesus’ first words to him were, “So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas.” Cephas is an Aramaic term and John then adds a note, (which means Peter [petros]).

Jesus changed his name to Petros – rock. Later, Matt. 16, he told him, “You are Peter (petros) and on this rock (petra) I will build my church.”

Now, in his letter, Peter builds on that concept using yet another word, *lithos* – a small stone, a building stone. But more than that, he calls him the “living stone.” We’ll look at that in a moment. But first, note the description Peter gives us of this living stone...

- rejected by (of, under) men
- chosen by (with, alongside of) God
- precious to him

These are important for us to remember – man’s opinion is not what counts, what we look for is that which is precious to God.

So, let’s consider for a moment the description of Jesus as a “living stone.” In the book of Daniel, in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision, Christ’s kingdom is pictured as a stone that destroyed all previous kingdoms. Jesus

himself, in Matt. 21 quoted Psalm 118:22, the same verse Peter used in our text, to refer to himself as the stone rejected by the builders. So, the idea of Peter referring to Jesus as a stone is not a surprise.

It is also not a great surprise that He is referred to as a **“living”** stone. Often, the non-gods—the idols of the heathen—were made of stone. The Old Testament prophets mocked them as lifeless objects which their worshippers had to carry about. In Deut. 4:28 Moses speaks of the idols of the pagans as *“...gods of wood and stone, the work of human hands, that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.”*

But, in contrast to that, the Lord Jesus is alive! He is the living stone! He has been raised from the dead, as evidence that He is precious in the Father’s sight. Not only is He alive, but...

He is also the source of life – the life-giving rock. Remember how the nation of Israel, when facing great thirst in the wilderness, complained to Moses. When Moses went to the Lord, He gave him instructions to strike a rock and water poured forth from the rock – that rock became a source of life-giving water for them. 1 Cor. 10 tells us, *“I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ...Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.”*

This **“living stone,”** precious in the sight of the Father, is the cornerstone of the spiritual house that God is building. As believers, we become a part of that building (v. 5). In v. 6, Peter turns to Isaiah 28:16 to show that his words are based upon the Old Testament promise of the Messiah to come. Peter used the same descriptive terms in verse 4 that we find quoted in v. 6 – showing Jesus is indeed the fulfilment of that promise.

To the believer, Jesus Christ is the Living Rock, the cornerstone on which God’s temple is being built, the source of life, both here and in eternity.

But, what about the unbeliever ...

## The Living Stone and the Unbeliever vv. 7-8

Those who trust in the “living stone” will not be put to shame (verse 6). Now in verse 7 Peter indicates that while there is “honor” for those who believe, there is dishonor for those who do not. (Read vv. 7-8) The rejection of Christ by unbelievers and the doom that awaits them is simply the fulfilment of the divine plan (“as they were destined to do.” verse 8)

Peter brings together two Old Testament prophecies about Christ as the rejected “Rock.” The first is from Psalm 118:22; the second from Isaiah 8:14. Those who disbelieve (verse 7) and are “disobedient to the Word” (verse 8) are, in reality, rejecting the precious “cornerstone” to their own doom.

And so, you have the contrast. Jesus Christ is the Rock, the Living Stone. But to some He is the precious Cornerstone, the rock of Ages, the source of life, while to others He is the stone of stumbling and the rock of offence.

So, in light of our relationship to the “living stone,” the precious cornerstone, we are called to be a special people and to carry out a special task and responsibility in the world.

## The Believer’s Role in God’s Plan vv. 9-10

In vv. 9-10 Peter points out in vivid language who and what we are as believers in this world.

*Read v. 9* - a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. – What a description of the church (the “called-out ones”) – *compare to the nation of Israel.*

*Read v. 10* – There is an OT connection context to this verse. The nation of Israel was chosen and set apart by God, not because of their goodness or merit but simply as the recipients of divine mercy.

But, when the people sinned and rebelled against God, He gave them a startling picture through the prophet Hosea. Hosea’s wife gave birth to a daughter, of whom God said, *“Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel to forgive them at all.”*

Then she bore a son and God said, *“Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.”* (Hosea 1:6-9)

But later on, God spoke of a time when they would return to Him, and we read in 2:21-23:

*“And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’”*

In yet a future day, after they have repented and returned to Him, Israel will once again be His people.

So, as Hosea promised Israel, although they were not the people of God, He would once again make them His people. Peter applies this same principle to the Gentiles. If those who are “not God’s people” (namely disobedient Israelites) can become “God’s people,” then surely disobedient Gentiles (“not God’s people”) can become God’s people.

I think these words are intended to produce in the Gentiles—in us—the proper response to divine grace. They are intended to produce a spirit of gratitude and humility. Just as Israel dare not take pride in her unbelieving past or take credit for her choosing and calling, along with all of its privileges, neither can we take any credit for our salvation. Salvation is all of grace, all of mercy.

But there is a reason for all of this – that you may proclaim... (v. 9)

## **Conclusion**

So what does this all mean for us today? In the following verses Peter speaks of how we ought to live in light of all this – we’ll look at that more next week. But let me close with this challenge. Verse 10 showed us a contrast – once you were not ... now you are ... there is a change which ought to be evident.

So, how are you growing up? Is your life different because you have come to Christ, the “living stone?” 2 Cor. 5:17 – “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...”