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Living as Exiles in a Hostile World – The Epistle of 1 Peter

(Part 16 – The True Israel, A Holy Temple and Holy Priesthood)

October 23, 2016

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 2:4-12

Scripture Reading: I Kings 8:1-27

1Pe 2:4-12 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, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

(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." (7) So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do

not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," (8) and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

(9) But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

(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.

(11) Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. (12) Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Once more, Peter is driving home the same message to us – be holy as God is holy. Be holy because your Father is holy. Be who you now are in Christ.

We know that a person's self-image, how they perceive themselves, is largely what determines how they live. If you think that you are worthless and unloved, that idea is going to have a profound and far-reaching effect upon how you behave. Or if you think that the world revolves around you, then you are going to be a self-centered brat! If the sinner thinks he or she is really quite good, then they will not perceive themselves to have any need of Christ.

Peter is telling Christians who they are and then calling us to live in light of that new identity we have in Christ. You no longer need to live as you used to, trying to gain some sense of worth from the futile, ignorant ways of a life of sin. You need not be selfish, but now you can afford to be self-less.

Let's look more closely then at this portion of chapter 2 and get a firm grip on who we are in Christ.

The Temple and Priesthood

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be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (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." (7) So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," (8) and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

We have studied the theme of the temple thoroughly in the past. In fact, so important is that topic that I cannot emphasize enough to you that this thread that runs from Genesis to Revelation, the temple, is what will make the Bible become clear to you. That sermon series is on Sermon Audio and is something that we should review and certainly be certain our children know. Every new Christian very much needs to get hold of a solid understanding of the Temple.

Exo 29:42-46 It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. (43) There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. (44) I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the

altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. (45) I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. (46) And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.

Joh 14:23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Eze 37:26-28 I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. (27) My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (28) Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore."

This is what the Bible is all about. Remember? Eden. Eden was the first temple, the place where God dwelt with man. God's plan of redemption in Christ is not only His plan for forgiveness of sin, but it is His master plan for redeeming and restoring Eden – the New Heavens and Earth. Restoration of the Temple that will never, ever be ruined again. From

Genesis to Revelation the storyline of the Bible is *God drawing closer and closer to us in Christ until finally He dwells in US as His temple and is now moving toward a Temple that fills the entire creation.*

Until that Temple arrives in all its fullness, "things" are still not right. The Temple is now, but not yet. Peter says here that WE are the Temple because Christ is in us, but *it is a temple still under construction.* Listen to Peter again:

(5) you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

WE are the stones! WE are the Temple. That is what this whole Bible doctrine of the indwelling of the Spirit in us is all about. That is what Pentecost was all about when the Spirit came upon the new New Covenant church. It is about Eden coming again. It is about GOD once more living/dwelling with us directly, just as it was in the first Eden before sin came. It about God making ALL things right.

Now, notice how this new temple construction got underway – Jesus Christ! He came and became the very foundation, THE cornerstone of the

new temple. And every single time a sinner is saved by grace in Christ, that person is added to the temple – he or she has the gates of Eden thrown open to them once more. “Come back, come on in!”

Eph 2:19-22 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, (20) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, (21) in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (22) In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Christ, both Peter and Paul say it, is the “cornerstone.” The beginning. The Apostles and Prophets – the truth God has shown us through them – enlarged that foundation and as the good news of the gospel continues to be announced and Christ’s sheep hear it, the Temple keeps growing. And one day it is going to be complete.

Eze 44:4 Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple, and I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple of the LORD. And I fell on my face.

Joh 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen

his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

THAT glory which no one could stand to look at, is IN us! In YOU, if you are a Christian.

2Co 6:14-18 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (15) What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? (16) What agreement has the temple of God with idols? **For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.** (17) Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, (18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

See it? Be who you are!

Christ is the cornerstone. Peter is quoting from the Old Testament here –

1Pe 2:6-8 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." (7) So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," (8) and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

Here is the Cornerstone passage in Isaiah 28. Notice that this truth is a two-edged one. Justice and rescue for those who believe, but destruction for those who reject Him:

Isa 28:15-18 Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an agreement, when the overwhelming whip passes through it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter"; (16) therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.' (17) And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line; and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter." (18) Then your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand; when the overwhelming scourge passes through, you will be beaten down by it.

Christ as the cornerstone of the true Temple is an important theme in the New Testament, as its frequency shows. Paul also taught it-

Rom 9:30-33 What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; (31) but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. (32) Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, (33) as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

Israel, the builders of the first earthly temple, "stumbled" when Christ came. They rejected Him, just as everyone does who will not believe in Him. *If you reject the most vital stone in the foundation of the Temple, you can never go in.*

False Temples Built on False Foundations

Just as Israel did, all who reject Christ today not only reject God's chosen cornerstone, *they most often choose their own cornerstone and then set about building their own temple.*

Babel continues. All false religion is an attempt to construct a counterfeit “temple of God.” That is what Israel did so that God rejected the temple in Jerusalem and it was destroyed. It is what Rome has done. The person who worships “nature” as their god does the same thing, calling the mountains their “temple.”

And one day this same Cornerstone is going to come crashing down on them in judgment:

Dan 2:34-46 As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. (35) Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

(36) "This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation. (37) You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, (38) and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them

all—you are the head of gold. (39) Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. (40) And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. (41) And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. (42) And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. (43) As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.

(44) And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, (45) just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation

sure." (46) Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him.

NOTE on the Inspiration of Scripture –

Listen to the London Confession of Faith, chapter 1 –

Paragraph 5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, and the majesty of the style, **the consent of all the parts**, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, and many other incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it does abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts. **8** John 16:13,14; 1 Cor. 2:10-12; 1 John 2:20,27

The consent of all the parts. This is what I want us to think about. Think of

this theme of The Temple. I am just showing you part of how it keeps arising in Scripture from beginning to end. Now think carefully on this and it should be a real boost to your faith.

ALL the writers of Scripture, some 40 different people, writing over a span of 1600 years – 16 CENTURIES – “consent” (agree) on this and all other themes. It’s the same thing in every book. Eden is being restored in Christ. The Temple. God choosing us as His people and dwelling with us and we with Him. How in the world would any book be slapped together by a mere human being or group of human beings, and have that kind of agreement and unity? The thing is impossible. The Bible is indeed God’s Word.

2Pe 1:19-21 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, (20) knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. (21) For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Pay attention. Pay attention. You can be certain this is God speaking to us. It

is His truth. Christ is the cornerstone. There IS a new Temple and YOU are in it. One day we are going to see it in all its fullness and glory, so don't live as you used to live. Don't let the world press you into its mold.

1Pe 2:9-11 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (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. (11) Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.