

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com

www.lightfordarktimes.com

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

Part 17 – The True Israel, A Holy Temple and Holy Priesthood (Pt2)

October 30, 2016

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 2:4-12

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 8

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.

We looked at this passage of Scripture last time, focusing on Peter's use of Isaiah 28 and the imagery of the church as the true temple of God of which Christ is the cornerstone foundation.

To become part of this temple then, that is, to enter into it and thus into the presence of God, dwelling with Him and He with us, a person necessarily must accept the foundation. You cannot be a "living stone" in this temple if you refuse the cornerstone. "No, no, I reject Jesus Christ. I want to go to heaven and have all the benefits God has to give, but I do not want Christ." Won't work. He is the cornerstone.

And we saw then that this fact of Christ as the foundation is a kind of two-edged sword, as Peter says. To those who believe, honor. But to those who refuse to believe in Christ – stumbling, a rock of offense. Let's look at this phrase more closely –

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," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. (1Pe 2:7-8)

Stone of stumbling, rock of offense. What is that? Notice, by the way, Peter's mention of the doctrine of God's sovereignty in all this:

"as they were destined to do."

Peter mentions and emphasizes God's election, His sovereignty, His predestination several times in his epistles. Destined, yet responsible.

This little phrase of Peter's is given to us as a given, as a matter of fact, fact! Yet it has sparked huge discussions and debates! It means that God Himself has appointed them to this end (Beale). At the same time, Peter unhesitatingly says "they stumble because they disobey the word." God's sovereignty does not annul human responsibility and guilt. Nor do these sinful actions somehow serve to limit God's sovereignty.

You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" (Rom 9:19-20)

Peter is drawing from Isaiah 8 when he mentions this stone of stumbling and rock of offense:

And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (Isa 8:14)

Once again, a reminder. Always go check out the OT context to help you properly understand the NT meaning. And I recommend once more, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, by G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson to help you with this.

So what is this stone and rock imagery? Stumbling and offense?

For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken." Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples. I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house

of Jacob, and I will hope in him. (Isa 8:11-17)

Isaiah was speaking the Lord's words of judgment to his disobedient, rebellious countrymen. They had consistently and continually refused to obey the Lord and trust in Him and instead turned to foreign alliances, looking to them for deliverance from enemies like Assyria.

The stone of offense and the rock of stumbling here *is the Lord Himself*. They would not trust in Him, He is an offense to them, so He is going to cause them to stumble as they try to escape Him and His judgment. The One they reject will end up destroying them.

In contrast, Isaiah says, "I will wait for the Lord...I will hope in him."

"...the Lord will be a sanctuary for those who regard him as holy and who fear him, 'but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.' In this context Yahweh himself, transparently, is the stone." (Beale)

And Peter says it is the very same now.

"...the same honored cornerstone, Christ Jesus himself, whom Peter's readers have trusted but who has been

rejected by so many others, not only has become the cornerstone even if they have rejected him but also will end up destroying them.” (Beale)

And again:

“[Peter] fully recognizes that some do sanctify Christ in their hearts and fully put their trust in him; he does not need to repeat the point [here]. But those who do not are not making a morally neutral decision; *Christ remains the cornerstone regardless of what they do, but now he becomes, for them, ‘a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.’*

...the reality is that wherever God discloses himself, people respond very differently. Those who do not fully put their trust in this rock in Peter’s day include a much wider constituency.

The logical link that Peter establishes (1 Pet 2:7-8) between the quotation from Psalm 118:22 and the quotation from Isaiah 8:14 simultaneously establishes that Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation and the one by whom all will be judged, and that the OT had already established a predictive pattern of division around God’s revelation – a division between trust and unbelief.

Beale also quoted another writer named Gopplet who very rightly said:

“Christ is laid across the pathway of humanity on its course into the future. In the encounter with him each person is changed: one for salvation, another for destruction....One cannot simply step over Jesus to go on about the daily routine and pass him by to build a future. Whoever encounters him is inescapably changed through the encounter: Either one sees and becomes ‘a living stone’ or one stumbles as a blind person over Christ and comes to ruin, falling short of one’s Creator and Redeemer and thereby of one’s destiny.”

How many people think they can? “I will just sidestep or step over Jesus and get on with my life apart from Him.” Can’t do it. Believe, or fall. Become a living stone founded on Him, or be crushed by Him.

Throughout the New testament Christ as the ultimate source of division of humanity is a clearly taught and assumed doctrine. Here we have it in these passages about Him being the cornerstone – a sure foundation for those who believe, and a crushing, destroying mountain for those who refuse Him.

Humanity in other words ultimately sorts out into only two groups. God's salvation in Christ is indeed exclusive.

Act 4:11-12 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. (12) And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

The forgiven. The condemned. The difference? Their response to Jesus Christ.

Mat 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (22) On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' (23) And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Joh 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Joh 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because

he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

This is basic. It sounds simple. But in our day it is vital that we be reminded often of this fact. Jesus. Only One. No other.

We are the Priesthood

Now, the other theme Peter mentions here in connection with the church as the true temple is this matter of Christians being a chosen and royal priesthood.

1Pe 2:4-5 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.

1Pe 2:9-10 **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.

The levitical priesthood of the OT was, then, just an earthly, temporal picture

for us of the true priesthood of Jesus Christ, He as the Chief Priest and we as priests in His priesthood.

Now then, what does this mean – that the Christian is a royal priest?

And what are these spiritual sacrifices (in contrast to the OT animal sacrifices) that we offer? And don't forget Peter's primary point here – *be who you are in Christ, not who you once were in your sins.*

Of course there is much more here besides the priesthood. Peter tells us that we are:

- A chosen race (in OT, Abraham's race but now in Christ, true Israel)
- A royal priesthood
- A holy nation
- God's special possession
- Objects of God's mercy

And every single one of these truths is seen in the OT in God's dealings with the earthly Israel.

Exo 19:5-6 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; (6) and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

Isa 43:20-21 The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, (21) the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.

Hos 2:21-23 "And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, (22) and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, (23) 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.'"

Can you see what has happened? God fulfilled these promises to the seed of Abraham, but to the TRUE seed in Christ, to the true Israel –

Rom 2:28-29 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. (29) But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

So here we are, in Christ, *a royal priesthood*. Royal because our Chief Priest is also the King! And we are priests in that we mediate and show God to the world. We are holy as He is

holy. We give sacrifices of praise to Him. We proclaim Him to the world. Look at it in these verses, and there are many more:

“The kingdom of God is composed of believers who must think of themselves as holy with respect to the world, set apart for purity and a purpose demanded by God. This is the priesthood that serves the King of the universe,” (Jobes, quoted by Beale)

Rom 12:1-2 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (2) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Rom 15:15-16 But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God (16) to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Heb 13:15-16 Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. (16) Do

not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Php 4:18 I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

Eph 5:1-2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. (2) And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

So you see the sacrifices that we offer as the King’s priests:

- Praise
- Holiness
- The proclamation of the gospel to the world so that we then offer up those who believe as sacrifices to God
- Love toward one another
- Our own selves then as living sacrifices (as opposed to dead, bloody sacrifices of the Old Covenant)
- Proclaiming the nature, holiness, attributes, and goodness of God (proclaiming His excellencies)

And ALL of these privileges are reminders to us of this:

1Pe 2:10-11 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.

-[therefore:]

(11) Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

We are elect exiles. We are a chosen, treasured nation of God. We have a homeland, but we aren't in it yet. There is still one great final Exodus that is coming. Until then, be holy as He is holy.

Now, because we are this chosen nation, citizens of heaven, our ultimate nationality is not that of any nation on this earth. And this goes further. Our *race* is not that of this world. It was not long before the world's hatred of this new race of humans in Jesus Christ became evident and that racial hatred is still active today. Skin color does not enter into this kind of racism because our fellow citizens are of all nationalities and races. No, the hatred of the race of Jesus Christ is because of the hatred of Christ.

How then are we to live in this world? Besides being holy, how are we to relate to, for example, non-Christian government rulers, employers, and

others in authority over us? And because we know we are going to be hated because of our new racial identity in Christ, should we go "looking for trouble" or does the Lord have other instructions for us in this regard?

These are the things Peter turns to next.