

COME TO CHRIST, THE LIVING STONE

1 PETER 02:04–08

Introduction

This is a picture of the great house that God is building, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are three pictures painted.

- I. Picture 1: Christ is the Living Stone; He was rejected by men, but chosen by God (v. 4).
- II. Picture 2: believers are living stones (vv. 5-6).
- III. Picture 3: unbelievers are disobedient builders (vv. 7-8).

I. 1 Peter 02:04 Jesus Christ, The Chief Cornerstone

There is the first picture — Jesus Christ is the Living Stone. How can a stone be living? It cannot. This is simply a picture of how God looks at Christ and His followers: they are like a building that is being built by God Himself. The foundation of God's building is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. If a person wants to be a part of God's building, he has to place his life upon the foundation Stone, Christ Himself. But note what this verse says: the living stone was rejected by men. When men looked at the Stone (Christ)...

- it was not wanted.
- it did not fit in with their plans.
- it was useless and unsuitable for what they were building.
- it was not worth the price.

Men rejected Christ because they wanted to build their lives like they wanted. They wanted to do their own thing. Therefore, they cast the Stone of God aside. But note: the stone has been chosen of God. It is the very stone that God has chosen to be the foundation stone for life. It is the only stone that can support and bear the weight of life. And note: the stone chosen by God is a living stone. What does this mean? God is eternal; hence, the building of God will last forever and ever. Therefore, the cornerstone laid by God is bound to be eternal; it shall never deteriorate or waste away. The cornerstone is living and shall exist forever and ever.

The symbolism of the living cornerstone says three significant things.

1. The living cornerstone is the first stone laid. All other stones are placed after it. It is the *preeminent* stone in time. So it is with Christ; He is *the first* of God's new movement.

=> Christ is the author of salvation. All others are the readers of the story.

Heb 2:10 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Heb 12:2 *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

=> Christ is the source of eternal salvation, of our faith. All others are the recipients of His promises.

Heb 5:9 *And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

=> Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, *beginning and the end*. All others come after Him and are under Him.

Rev 1:8 *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”* (cp. 21:6; 22:13).

=> Christ is the forerunner, one who went before us into the very presence of God. All others enter God’s presence after Him.

Heb 6:19-20 *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.*

2. The cornerstone is the supportive stone. All other stones are placed upon it and held up by it. They all rest upon it. It is the preeminent stone in position and power. So it is with Christ; He is the support and power, the Foundation of God’s new movement.

=> Christ is *the Head cornerstone*, the only true foundation upon which man can build. All crumble who are not laid upon Him.

1 Cor 3:11 *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

=> Christ is *the chief cornerstone* upon which all others are joined together. All who wish to be joined together have to be laid upon Him.

Eph 2:20-22 *Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

=> Christ is *the living Stone* upon which all others have to be built if they wish to live and be a part of God’s spiritual house. All others have to be built upon Him if they wish to live and have their spiritual sacrifice accepted by God.

1 Pet 2:4-5 *As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

3. The living Stone is the stone to which men must come if they are to become a part of God's building. It is to Christ that we must come. No one can be a part of God's building unless he places himself upon the foundation stone laid by God. God accepts no one who refuses to become a part of His building. And God is just like all builders; He has a foundation upon which all workers must lay the stones of their lives.

Mat 7:24-27 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

1 Cor 2:11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

2 Tim 2:19 Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

II. 1 Peter 02:05-06 Believers are Living Stones

There is the second picture — believers are living stones. Remember: God is eternal which means that His building is eternal. The Foundation Stone laid by Hun shall never decay nor waste away. Christ lives forever and ever. Therefore, when we place our lives upon the living stone of God, the living stone supports and holds us up eternally. We become living stones, stones that shall exist forever and ever. Note three significant facts.

1. Believers are being built into a spiritual house (v. 5). This is a picture of the church that God is building all over the earth. It includes all believers of all generations. It is a picture of what is called the universal church or universal temple of God. Note that God's house is a *spiritual house*. What does this mean? It means that God's house is spiritual as opposed to physical. A physical house is not permanent; it ages, deteriorates and wastes away. But not God's spiritual house. The spiritual world or dimension is the real world, the world that is permanent and eternal. Therefore, the spiritual house of God does not age, deteriorate or decay. This means two wonderful things.
 - a. First, when we turn to God and lay our lives upon the foundation stone of Christ, we become a part of God's spiritual house. We shall never die or waste away, but we shall live permanently, forever and ever in God's spiritual and eternal house.
 - b. Second, there are many stones who are going to live forever with us. It takes many stones to build a great building, and the same is true of God's spiritual house. We are only one of many who are being placed into God's great spiritual house. The point is this:

there is no room for pride, arrogance, envy, jealousy, criticism, backbiting, anger, accusations, discrimination, prejudice or wrath among God's building; no room for a stone to become puffed up over another stone.

All living stones are needed in God's house. In fact, the house cannot be completed unless there are enough stones to build it. There is a place for all of us, and we are going to exist together forever. Therefore, we are to place ourselves and take our place in the house of God. We are to place ourselves right where we belong and do our part in holding up the building. We are not to seek the place or position or function of any other stone. We are not to weaken the building to any degree.

Thought 1. William Barclay tells a story from Sparta and then drives the point home with a striking application.

“There is a famous story from Sparta. A Spartan king boasted to a visiting monarch about the walls of Sparta. The visiting monarch looked around and he could see no walls. He said to the Spartan king, ‘Where are these walls about which you speak and boast so much?’ The Spartan king pointed at his bodyguard of magnificent Spartan troops. ‘These,’ he said, ‘are the walls of Sparta, and every man of them a brick.’

“Now, the point is quite clear. So long as a brick lies by itself it is useless. It only becomes of use when it is built into a building. That is why it was made; and it is in being built into a building that it realizes its function and the reason for its existence. It is so with the individual Christian. To realize his destiny he must not remain alone, but must be built into the fabric and edifice of the Church” (The Letters of James and Peter, p. 231).

2. Believers are a holy priesthood (v. 5). The chief function of the priest is to stand between God and men, to represent men before God and to present men to God. Man has just never felt worthy enough to approach God; he has usually felt that God was so far away that he could never reach God. Therefore, man has felt the need for priests to carry his case before God.

The point to note is man's thoughts about God, how far away he thinks God is — so far away that man needs a priest, some godly person to represent him before God. But note the Scripture: believers are being built up as an holy priesthood. Every single believer now stands before God as a priest. He can now approach God on his own. God is not far off and removed from man. Any person who turns to God and lays his life upon the foundation of Christ becomes a part of God's spiritual house. That person is in the very house of God itself. He can talk and share with God whenever he chooses. He can worship and praise God and cry out for God's help and deliverance any time he wishes. The believer himself is now a priest before God. (See *Priest*, 1 Pet. 2:9.)

Thought 1. The priesthood of the believer is one of the great teachings of Scripture. Just imagine! We stand before God as a priest, as one who has access into God's presence any time of any day. There is no reason whatsoever why we should ever be overcome by any problem or trouble in this life. We are in the house of God. We can approach Him anytime and receive whatever we need to meet the demands of life: wisdom, provision, resource or strength.

Now note why we are made priests before God: that we might offer spiritual sacrifices to God. In the past men have brought their sacrifices to priests and had the priests present their sacrifices to God. But now believers themselves are made priests for this very purpose: that they might offer up their own sacrifices to God. Men are now to bring their own offerings and sacrifices to God. They themselves are now the priests in the house of God. However, note a critical point: their sacrifices are made acceptable only by Jesus Christ. A person has to have his life lying upon the foundation of Christ. He must be trusting and believing in the support and power of Christ to make him a part of God's house. The only sacrifices that God accepts are the sacrifices made within His house. Scripture says that the believer is to make the following sacrifices.

=> He is to sacrifice his body as a living sacrifice to God. He is not to conform any longer to this world.

Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

Luke 14:27 "And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

Rom 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Gal 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Phil 2:17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.

2 Tim 4:6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.

=> He is to sacrifice his life to God as he walks day by day. He is to follow God in love, even as Christ loved us and gave Himself as an offering and a sacrifice to God.

***Eph 5:1-2** Be imitators of God. therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

***1 John 3:16** This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

=> He is to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.

***Heb 13:15** Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name.*

***Psa 107:22** Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.*

***Psa 116:17** I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD.*

***Jer 33:11** The sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD, saying, “Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good; his love endures forever.” For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before, says the LORD.*

***Jonah 2:9** “But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the LORD.”*

=> He is to offer the sacrifices of good works and gifts and money.

***Heb 13:16** And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

***Luke 12:33** “Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”*

***Acts 20:35** “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

***Rom 12:13** Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

***Gal 6:6-10** Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not*

give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

1 Tim 6:18 *Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*

⇒ He is to offer spiritual sacrifices, that is, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

1 Pet 2:5 *You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

Gal 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Psa 4:5 *Offer right sacrifices and trust in the LORD.*

⇒ He is to sacrifice his life in order to lead people to faith in Christ.

Phil 2:16-17 *As you hold out the word of life — in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour for nothing. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.*

Mat 4:19 *“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”*

John 4:35 *“Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”*

1 Cor 9:19-23 *Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law, so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law, so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.*

Psa 126:6 *He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.*

3. Believers are a fulfilment of prophecy (v. 6. Cp. Psa. 118:22; Isa. 28:16.) The prediction that the Messiah would be the chief or chosen cornerstone of God’s building was made centuries before Christ ever came into the world. Note the four great things predicted:

⇒ That God Himself would lay the cornerstone. God Himself would send the Messiah into the world and use Him as the foundation of God’s eternal house.

- => That God would select or elect Him to be the cornerstone. There would be plenty of philosophies, religions and ideas about how to best build a world and life for man. But God would choose only one foundation stone for the world and life: Jesus Christ.
- => That God would count His foundation stone precious. The stone selected by Him would be the most precious thing in all the universe: it would be His very own Son. He would choose His own Son to become the Foundation Stone for men's lives and for the eternal world God was planning. There is nothing in the world that is any more precious to God than His own dear Son. Therefore, God would count Him precious, the only thing precious enough to serve as the Foundation Stone for the eternal house of God.
- => That believers would not be put to shame (*kataischunthei*), that is, confounded, disappointed and confused. Believing and trusting in Jesus Christ — leaning upon him and building upon Him — is the only way to keep from being eternally confused, shamed and disappointed.

The point is this: believers — their salvation in Christ — are the fulfilment of this prophecy. God predicted that He would be building a spiritual and eternal house for believers. He laid the foundation when He sent Christ into the world, and believers have been laying the stones of their lives upon Christ ever since. How? By believing in Him, that is, by laying their lives upon Him or by building upon Him. The result has been phenomenal: those who have built upon Christ have experienced a most wonderful thing. All the confusion, shame and disappointment in this life and the fear of judgment in the next life have disappeared. Believers are now flooded with life, a life that just overflows with love, joy, peace, victory and triumph and with confidence and assurance that all things shall be well in the future.

John 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 3:15-16 That everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Rom 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

III. 1 Peter 02:07-08 Unbelievers, Disobedient Builders

The third picture — unbelievers are pictured as disobedient builders. Christ has done so much for man, He should be the most precious thing in a man's life. But the greatest tragedy in all of history is that He is not considered to be precious by some people. He is to believers, but they are a small minority of people. The vast, vast majority of people are unbelievers. They just do not believe that Jesus Christ is the foundation stone for their lives. The four points of the Scripture state it well.

1. Unbelievers disqualify and reject the stone. They look at the various foundation stones of life and...
 - they do not want the Stone [Christ].
 - they do not think that the Stone will fit in with their plans.
 - they do not believe the Stone [Christ] will suit what they are building.
 - they do not believe the Stone [Christ] is worth the price. They just do not think the Stone [Christ] is worth all they are and have.

The point is forceful: they reject and disqualify the stone. They do not want Christ enough to give all they are and have in order to get him.

2. Christ is made the Head of the corner anyway. Despite the rejection of men, Christ is made the cornerstone of the only permanent and lasting building. God selected and elected Him despite man. And if man is to become a part of an eternal house that lasts forever and that brings an abundance of life, he has to lay his life upon the foundation of Christ.
3. Unbelievers stumble over the stone of Christ. He is a rock that makes them fall. What does this mean? When people look at Jesus Christ, they stumble over Him; they do not understand...
 - how He could be anything other than a man just like the rest of us.
 - how He could be born of a virgin, God incarnate in human flesh.
 - how He could live a sinless life, live without committing a single sin.
 - how His death could be any more than the death of a martyr who died for a great cause.
 - how His resurrection is anything but a tall tale made up by His followers to secure more and more followers.

Simply stated, many people do not understand nor believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He was sent into the world by God to save men; that He was able to live a sinless life because He was the God-Man who had come to earth for that very purpose; that He died and arose from the dead as the Perfect and Ideal Man so that His ideal death and resurrection could cover man.

People just stumble over the facts or else they fall because Christ lays the burden of total commitment upon man. After all, if Jesus Christ is truly who He claimed to be, we owe Him our lives — all that we *are and have*. Most men are not willing to give up the right to their lives and property. They fall at this demand of Christ. Therefore, they stumble over Him. But note:

=> to stumble means that we have tripped up and fallen, that we damage ourselves.

=> to fall means that we hurt ourselves.

4. Note another fact: what we are stumbling over. We are actually stumbling over the message, the very Word of God itself. What is so awful about this? The Word of God is the only incorruptible, imperishable seed on earth that lives and stands forever (cp. 1 Pet. 1:23-25). If we reject the glorious gospel of God's Word, the glorious gospel that Jesus Christ is the Foundation Stone of God's building, then we are rejecting the only hope of living forever. We are appointing ourselves to a state of unbelief and disobedience to God. That is, we are steeping ourselves in more and more unbelief and becoming harder and harder to the gospel. We are living lives that are becoming more and more disobedient.

Luke 22:67 "If you are the Christ, " they said, "tell us." Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me."

John 3:11 "I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony."

John 3:16-18 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

John 3:36 "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

John 8:24 "I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."

John 12:37 Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.

Heb 3:12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

Heb 4:11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

Jer 6:15 "Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them," says the LORD. ■

KNOW WHO YOU ARE: THE PEOPLE OF GOD

1 PETER 02:09–10

Introduction

Know who you are. You are not a people who stumble over Christ, a people who question His claims and deity and refuse to believe Him. You are a people who believe Christ, a people who are building your lives upon the Foundation Stone of God's Son. You have taken your lives and laid them upon Him; you have entrusted your whole being into the keeping of Christ. Therefore, know who you are: you are the people of God, the people He is building to live with Him forever and ever. (See 1 Pet. 2:4-8.)

- I. Know what kind of people you are (v. 9).
- II. Know what your purpose is: to declare His praises (v. 9).
- III. Know what has happened to you (v. 10).

I. *1 Peter 02:09 A Chosen People, A Royal Priesthood*

Know what kind of people you are. Once you believe in God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, you become very, very special to God. You become special because you trust His Son. God the Father has only one Son...

- only one Son who has God's perfect nature, who is holy, righteous and pure, loving, kind and gentle just as God is.
- only one Son who came to earth to save men by dying for them by showing them how much God loves them.

God loves His Son so much that when a person trusts His Son — really believes and trusts Him — God will do anything for that person. The person becomes very, very special to God. God takes all believers and does four wonderful things for them.

1. Believers become a “chosen people” (*genos eklekton*). The Greek words actually mean a *chosen or elect race*. Peter takes the term from the Old Testament where God stated the same thing about Israel.

Isa. 43:20-21 “My people, my chosen. The people I formed for myself.”

The idea is that of a new race of people, a new species that differs entirely from the other races upon earth. This is a shocking statement to some people; nevertheless it is exactly what the Word of God claims. God is actually creating a new race of people upon earth. How? How can it be that believers from China, Russia, Asia, Africa, India, Europe, the Americas, the Islands, Canada and all the other nations of the world form a new race of people? By the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is changing people inwardly, not outwardly. He is not changing facial and skin features. These mean little; they are only superficial differences that change, age, perish, die and decay ever so rapidly.

God is changing people within their hearts and minds and lives, changing them where it really matters. God is implanting His divine nature within believers. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, God's divine nature is immediately implanted into his heart and life.

=> The person is *born again*.

John 3:3 *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

John 3:5-6 *Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."*

1 Pet 1:23 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

1 John 5:1 *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.*

=> The person receives a *renewed mind*.

Rom 12:2 *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Rom 8:5 *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.*

=> The person becomes a *new creation*.

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

Gal 6:15 *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.*

=> The person becomes a *new person, a new self*.

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

=> The person receives a *new spirit*.

Ezek 11:19 *I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.*

Rom 6:4 *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

Rom 7:6 *But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*

(See Eph. 4:17-19 for the New Race of People God is creating.)

2. Believers become a *royal priesthood*. To a person who has never given his life to Jesus Christ, God seems far away and off in outer space someplace. God just does not seem that concerned with human life. There is no personal relationship and little, if any, fellowship and communion with God. A day by day relationship that praises and honours God and brings one's needs to God and knows that God will meet one's needs — all this is missing to the person who has never committed his life to Christ. God seems untouchable and unreachable and out of range of man's day to day affairs. Without Jesus Christ a person just has no access and no closeness to God. This is the reason men have always felt the need to have priests, a body of people who would dedicate their lives to God and who would carry the needs of men before God. Men have felt the need to have a representative before God, some godly priest who could present his needs to God.

This is the glorious message of the gospel: when we receive Jesus Christ as our Saviour, God creates us into a royal priesthood. God makes a royal priest out of everyone of us. He gives us open access into His presence forever and ever. We can actually approach God anytime. In fact, God expects us to live in His presence — to fellowship, commune and walk in His presence all day every day.

Note the word “*royal*,” a royal priesthood. This simply means that we are priests of royalty, priests who belong to the Sovereign Majesty of the universe, the King of kings and Lord of lords. We are the priesthood of God Himself, the priests who rule and reign with Christ and who serve and worship God face to face, day by day, hour by hour and moment by moment. We are the priests who live and move and have our being in His presence, who walk and live in open communion with Him.

Thought 1. How many of us actually walk and live in the presence of God like this? How many know what it is to have an *unbroken communion* with God? How many know what it is to be praying always? May God convict our hearts and stir us to recommit our lives to prayer and communion — to praying always — to seeking an unbroken communion and fellowship with Him every moment of the twenty four hours of every day.

1 Pet 2:5 *You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

Rev 1:6 *And has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

Rev 20:6 *Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.*

Exo 19:6 *“You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”*

John 15:7 *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

2 Cor 10:3-5 *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

Eph 6:18 *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

Phil 4:6-8 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.*

1 Th 5:17 *Pray continually.*

Heb 10:22 *Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

James 4:8 *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

3. Believers become a *holy nation*. This is a very meaningful title for believers. Just think about it: God is building a *new nation* of people. He is drawing people from all over the world, people from all the nations of the world, and creating a new nation. What is the nation? It is the *holy nation* of God. Remember: the word “holy” (hagios) means separated, set apart and different. Any person who is willing to separate from the sin and evil of this world and set his life apart unto God, God will take that person and make him a citizen of His holy nation. This is what holy means: to be different from

the world, from its sin, evil and death. It means to be separated from the evil life of the world and set apart to the holy life of God. The person who turns to God becomes a citizen of God's holy nation:

- => He serves the Sovereign Head of God's nation, even God Himself.
- => He obeys the laws of God's nation.
- => He is dedicated to follow the customs and lifestyle of God's nation.
- => He speaks up for and defends the nation of God.

Exo 19:6 “‘You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

Lev 11:45 *I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.*

Isa 35:8 *And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it.*

Luke 1:74-75 *To rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

2 Cor 7:1 *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

1 Th 3:13 *May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.*

1 Pet 1:16 *For it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

2 Pet 3:10-12 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.*

4. Believers become a “people who belong to God” (*laos eis peripoiesin*). The Greek means...
 - “a people for God's own possession” (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 98).
 - “the people to be His very own” (Charles B. Williams. *The New Testament in the Language of the People*. “The Four Translation New Testament.” New York, 1966).

- “a people saved to be His own” (William F. Beck. *The New Testament in the Language of Today*. “The Four Translation New Testament.” New York, 1966).

This is a most precious thought: that God makes us His very own people, a very special possession of His. Possession has the idea of value, of worth and preciousness. We are more precious to God than all the precious gems and treasures of the world. Possession also has the idea of provision, protection and security. We are God’s possession, His very special people; therefore, He will provide and protect us and make us secure in every sense of the word.

Exo 19:5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine.

Deu 14:2 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

Psa 100:3 Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Luke 1:17 “And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Acts 15:14 Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself.

Eph 1:13-14 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession — to the praise of his glory.

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

1 PETER 02:09 PRIEST, PRIESTHOOD, MEDIATOR

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 02:09

A priest is a person who has access into God's presence, who represents men before God and God before men. He is a mediator between God and men: he offers sacrifices and makes prayer to God for men. The priest was always looked upon as the one person who could carry a man's case before God and God would accept the man because of the priest's intercession.

1. Throughout Israel's history the high priest was the chief priest who essentially had four functions.
 - => He supervised the other priests.
 - => He made a sin offering (Lev. 4).
 - => He offered a sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16).
 - => He was shown the will of God (Num. 27:21; Neh. 7:65).
2. The development of the priesthood seems to have been as follows: at first, individuals were priests (Gen. 4:3-4). Later on the head of a family, usually the father, began to serve as the priest (Gen. 8:20; 12:7; 13:8; 26:25; 31:54). When God created the nation Israel and gave Israel the law at Mount Sinai, He said that the nation was to be unto God "a kingdom of priests" (Exo. 19:6). But Israel failed to obey God's law. So God turned to one family of Israel, Aaron's family, and appointed them as the priests who were to minister to the nation (Exo. 28:1; Lev. 21:16-24).
3. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is said to be the perfect and eternal High Priest of God Himself (see Heb. 7:1-8:5; 10:1-18). The sacrifice which He offered to God for men was the death of Himself. What this means is this: Jesus Christ has made the perfect and eternal sacrifice to God. He died for our sins, paid the penalty and judgment of death for us. No other sacrifice by death has to be made. God has accepted Christ's sacrifice of Himself — eternally.

Before Christ the presence of God was said to dwell in the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle and Temple. Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place and that only once a year. It was separated from men by a veil. But when Christ died, Scripture says that the veil was torn from top to bottom *by an act of God* (Mt. 27:51). The torn veil is also said to be a symbol of Christ's body which was sacrificed or torn upon the cross (Heb. 10:20). All believers now have access to God through the death of Christ — into the holiest of holies right along with Christ (Heb. 10:19-22).

4. Since Christ, the individual believer has become his own priest before God; that is, he has the right to approach God for himself. As priest, the believer has two functions: he is to offer intercession and he is to offer sacrifices to God. He makes the following sacrifices to God.

=> He sacrifices his own body (Rom. 12:1; Ph. 2:17; Tim. 4:6; Jas. 1:27; 1 Jn. 3:16).

=> He sacrifices praise to God continually (Heb. 13:15; cp. Exo. 25:22).

=> He sacrifices his substance (Rom. 12:13; Gal. 6:6, 10; Tit. 3:14; Heb. 13:2, 16; 3 Jn. 5-8).

=> He sacrifices his service “to do good” (Heb. 13:16). □

II. *1 Peter 02:09 Believer’s Purpose*

Know what your purpose is. Why does God do so much for believers? There is one supreme reason:

1 Pet 2:9b That you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

The statement “that you may declare” (*hopos exaggeilete*) means to speak forth; to tell out; to publish abroad; to set forth. The word “praises” (*aretas*) means virtues, excellencies, and the supreme and eminent qualities of God (Alan Stibbs, *The First Epistle General of Peter*: “The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” p. 104). The very task of the believer is to witness for God, to share the glorious message of God. What is that message? Note the verse: “the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.” The message that we are to share is the glorious message of salvation. God will deliver man out of darkness into the light. This is what He has done for believers. Therefore, we are to proclaim the glorious truth that God has saved us through the Light of the world, through Jesus Christ Himself. He has saved us out of the darkness of sin and death and delivered us into the light of eternity. We shall live forever. We are to praise God, proclaim the glorious message of His wonderful light or salvation.

Mark 16:15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

2 Cor 4:13 It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.

2 Cor 5:20 We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 4:20 “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

Psa 66:16 Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.

Isa 63:7 I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us — yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

Mal 3:16 Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.

III. 1 Peter 02:10 Believers, The People of God

Know what has happened to you. Two great facts about believers are covered in this verse.

1. In the past believers were not a people, but now they have been made into the people of God. This is striking language. What does it mean *not to be a people*? Are unbelievers not a people? It means to be without purpose and significance in life; to be missing the very point of life, the very reason for living. It means God created man and gave man life. If man does not live that life, then he is not living, not in the real sense of living. He exists, but he is missing out on life, on what life really is. He is missing the very purpose, meaning and significance of life. He shall never fulfil, satisfy or complete the purpose of life.

But when a person comes to God’s Son, when a person enters the light of Christ, God saves him and gives him the light of life. He is given the light of life’s purpose, meaning and significance. He becomes a member of the people of God. He fulfils, satisfies and completes life and all that life is meant to be.

John 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Rom 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

2 Cor 6:17-18 “Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

Gal 4:4-6 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”

Deu 14:2 *For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.*

Hosea 11:1 *“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.”*

2. In the past believers had not received mercy, but now they have received mercy. Before we were saved we were like everyone else: we ignored, neglected, cursed, rebelled against and rejected God. We refused to change our lives and to cry out for the mercy of God: therefore, God could not have mercy upon us. But when we repented and turned to God, God had mercy upon us and saved us. He forgave our sin and neglect and brought us into His love and grace and gave us the glorious privilege of living with Him forever. God had mercy upon us and allowed us the glorious privilege of becoming a member of the people of God.

Eph 2:4-9 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Titus 3:5 *He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

Psa 103:17 *But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children.*

Lam 3:22-23 *Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

Joel 2:13 *Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.*

Micah 7:18 *Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. ■*