

God's Grand Plan for His People (Part 1)

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[0:00] Take your Bibles this morning and open them to 1 Peter chapter 2.

! 1 Peter chapter 2, and if you would go ahead and find verse 4. I'm going to read here at the outset of the sermon, verses 4 through 10. So, in case you didn't hear me, 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 4 through 10.

God's Word says, Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious.

You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it is also contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.

[1:21] Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious. But to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

They stumble, being disobedient to the word to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, who once were not a people, but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Marvelous passage of Scripture. Now, this morning, before we consider the meaning of this exciting passage of Scripture, and I say right here at the outset, it is an exciting passage of Scripture, but it's not all that easy to understand.

In fact, I think I have grappled more with this particular passage than I have of any passage as yet in this first letter of Peter.

It's not all that easy to understand, but when you begin to understand it, it's exciting. Very exciting. But, I must hold back just a moment before we really get into this passage of Scripture.

[2:56] Let me, first of all, make sure that we stay in contact, or contact, rather, with the context.

That is, let me remind you of Peter's primary reason for writing this letter in the first place. And I have tried to do this several junctures along the way as we've been preaching, or I've been preaching through this letter.

We need to keep the context there before us. understand how each portion of the letter fits in with the whole. In this case, that is, the whole in relation to Peter's primary reason for writing.

Peter wrote this letter to first... I'm having trouble with my tongue this morning. You ever have that happen to you? Peter's writing to first century Christians.

There I go. First century Christians. In fact, brand new Christians in many ways. They're Christians that are a part of churches.

[4:13] Individual churches, like Highland Park Baptist Church, is a local body of believers. The assembly, the church, and so Peter's writing to churches like ours that were scattered around the region of the world known as Asia Minor.

And so he's writing to these select churches this letter. And I would assume, we can assume, that the letter was passed around to all of them so that they could all read it. And they did read it.

And these first century Christians were experiencing severe persecution. Here's the point of context that we need to keep foremost in our minds as we study this book, this letter.

They were suffering a level of persecution that you and I know nothing whatsoever about. Except maybe in some things we've read about Christians even today.

Parts of the world that are suffering persecution on the level that these Christians were suffering. And Peter makes that pretty clear numerous times throughout the letter. That's what was going on

with his readers, his first readers.

[5:29] These churches scattered around the world of this day in Asia Minor. And why is Peter writing? He's writing to encourage them. I mean, he's writing to deal with that issue, the issue of persecution, and he wants to encourage them.

He wants to help them through this time. And he wants to also not only encourage them, but instruct them. That is, his desire is to help enable them to live in victory in the midst of and in spite of severe persecution.

That's the idea here. That's why he's writing. I'd have to admit that if this letter had been written by some pastors today, it would read just a little bit differently. That is, we might find the letter sounding more like some of Job's friends and, or so-called friends and counselors, if you've read the book of Job.

And so we might find Peter writing something like this. You, you, you, you, Christians out there in these churches, you're suffering persecution. You must not be living right. That is, you must not, must be in some kind of sin.

And that's why God is punishing you and allowing you to endure these things. Or maybe you are out of God's will. I can imagine that some of us or some preachers today might write a letter like that to a persecuted bunch of Christians.

[6:53] You know, you must be out of God's will because this really ought not to be happening to you. God has promised you better. And so it's not God's fault, it must be your fault. And so you, you need to, you know, find out what it is.

Maybe God's trying to get your attention. Can you imagine that a letter like that would be written today? I think it probably would. Or, on the other hand, if it was written by one of the feel-good, warm, fuzzy preachers popular today, we might find it reading like this.

You know, you just, you Christians out there, you need to have a positive attitude about things. And so the whole letter would be designed to kind of bolster them emotionally and, and psychologically and so they might feel positive about the world in which they live.

And even more important, they ought to feel positive about themselves, you know. You know, you just smile and be at peace with yourself and with your world.

And, while you're at it, stop being so dogmatic about your faith and try to win and influence your enemies. And this would be the way to, you know, to remove yourself from this persecution.

[8:08] Or maybe, you know, a preacher today might send them a five-step plan on how to, to escape and get out of Christian persecution.

But we don't find any of this in the letter. by Peter's hand, what he wrote. And so what was his approach? Well, I have reminded you of this all throughout our study of this letter, but it's very clear that Peter's response was to give them a theology course on salvation.

And that's really what he does in chapter 1, verses 1 through 11. He reminds them of their great salvation. And then, after that, he follows that up with some commands.

Imagine that. Imagine a preacher writing a letter today to persecuted Christians and instead of trying to find ways to encourage them emotionally and psychologically, he issues some commands. You know, that seems a little bit negative to us. But that's what Peter does. He issues some commands connected with their salvation. and what their salvation, that is, what their salvation demands of them in life.

[9:22] And there are five of them in all. We've already looked at them. Four of them appear in chapter 1, verses 12 through 25, through to the end of the chapter. And we looked at the fifth one last week, there in the first three verses of chapter 2, where Peter says, desire the spiritual milk, the pure milk of the Word.

Now, this is his response to their suffering for Christ. That's Peter's approach. Not a word about, or a word of sympathy about how he, how sorry he is that they are enduring such persecution.

Do I have any words of sympathy in here? Not a word here about how unfair it is that they are having such persecution, enduring such persecution, some of them dying, some of them losing their jobs, some losing their families, some being put in prison, some tortured.

Not a word here from Peter about how unfair that is. See, that's the way we think. There's not a word in the letter here about how, what they might do to stop this injustice and to escape this persecution.

Not a single word about who is to blame for this. And that's the way we think. We want to find who's to blame for this.

[10:52] Sometimes we even come to the place of concluding that God is to blame. So not a word about that. But yet, Peter's words here in the letter apparently were very helpful to these believers.

And they're all designed to encourage them and to instruct them and very helpful to them. And I would maintain today that his words are very helpful to us.

Today. As we read them and as we study them. And now, he's given them a doctrinal course on their salvation.

He has issued some commands that spring from that great salvation. And now, as he continues his encouragement, starting in chapter 2 and verse 4, Peter reveals to his readers something quite exciting, quite amazing.

And the more we study it and understand it and connect what Peter is saying here in these verses that I read just a moment ago, the more we see them connected to other places in Scripture, the more exciting it becomes to us.

[12:09] He writes to them about something that's incredible. Incredible. It's God's grand plan for their lives that goes way out beyond the kind of quality of life and the life they're experiencing at the moment.

It's a grand scheme. We might call it the bigger picture in our modern day. Although sometimes it's hard for us to know just what that bigger picture is.

You know, we hear that expression and what is that big picture? Well, we're going to discover that here this morning from this text. See, when we suffer, we as Christians, when we suffer, no matter what the cause, no matter what the source of that suffering may be, it may be persecution or maybe other points of suffering and affliction that are very common to life in this fallen world.

And so when we experience those things, we have a tendency sometimes to think that we have been disenfranchised from God. Somehow He's forgotten us.

Maybe even somehow we get to thinking that we're much of much lesser value to Him than maybe others of His church. That somehow we're alone and that's why we're struggling.

[13:36] See, Christians have a tendency to think that. And I think there is some valid reason to think that maybe these Christians to whom Peter was writing were feeling the same thing.

An alienation. Disenfranchisement from God. They're way out there, you know, and there's the church in Jerusalem and there's the kind of the mother church and the heart of Christianity in the world today and these are scattered out into regions way out there and they are suffering, I mean, tremendously.

And I think the implication is they got to thinking that somehow God has forgotten them out there.

My first trip to Ukraine several years ago, I'll never forget one of, what one of our translators said to me.

We were talking about, you know, how, you know, how should we preach to the people of this culture because I'm from America there in Ukraine and the cultures are quite different and certainly we share the gospel just like it is in the scripture and what is it that I need to do to minister to this then little church there in Nikolaivka, Ukraine and he said to me, you know, beyond preaching and teaching the gospel and preaching God's word, the thing this little church needs most is for them to know that what your church is doing over there in America and what they're doing here in Ukraine are connected together.

That we're all part of the same plan. That really stuck with me and in subsequent trips to Ukraine not only Nikolaivka but Shariavo and Makarovo and some other small little villages that I don't even remember the names of now.

[15:41] Along with preaching the gospel and teaching God's word to the members of those little fledgling, little struggling churches, I also tried to convey that we in America are connected with you in the gospel, in the ministry of the word.

We're connected with God and his big plan and I think that's important and it's important for us when we sometimes feel alienated that God has a grand scheme, grand plan.

It goes way out beyond this world. So no matter what you're suffering here, just know that you're part of something really big, something huge.

And Peter reveals to us what that is here. and sometimes because of our circumstances we just can't see it. So what is it? What is this grand plan of God's?

Well, in reality, the whole text kind of fleshes it out. Everything that I read, verses 4 through 10, flesh out this grand plan of God that God has for his people, that God is accomplishing in his people.

[16:57] The verses 4 and 5 put it all together in a nutshell. And so, let me just give it to you here in a nutshell, though it's going to take us a couple of Sundays to really flesh out this entire passage.

There are three things that are identified in this passage that are or represent God's grand plan for us, for his people.

And it's this. Number one, he is building a temple for his glory. Now, that may not make any sense to you, but it will as we go along.

That's what God is doing. He's building a temple for his glory. And guess what? Number two, every temple requires priests to serve.

And guess what? We are those priests. A royal priesthood. God's own special people.

[18:17] As Peter says, God's own special people. So God is building a temple for his glory. And we are that temple being built up on Christ.

And every temple requires priests. And we are those priests. A holy, royal, priesthood. God's own special people. And third, what is the duty of a priest?

To offer up the sacrifice. That's what priests do in the temple. To offer up the sacrifice. And guess what?

We are that sacrifice. We are that sacrifice. Spiritual sacrifices, Peter says here in verse 5, spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ.

You see, listen, just as Jesus was temple, priest, and sacrifice, we too are all three in Christ.

[19:23] All three of those things. And understand this, though, the significant part of this plan is taking place right now. I mean, it is. It's taking place right now. It was taking place for those first century Christians who were out there in those churches scattered around the furthest parts away from the center of the church of that day.

Just as they were experiencing in those days, they were experiencing a significant part of this great work, this grand plan that God was doing in them and through them.

Though it's right now taking place right here where we live today, the ultimate completion of it is out there in the future. out in the future.

There's going to be a grand opening for God's temple when he's finished building it. I know that's kind of crude. I don't think God's going to have a ribbon cutting ceremony for his temple when it's all complete.

And we are all joined together, fitted together. But it is future. And that's why I believe there is such a profound element of encouragement for these Christians who were enduring persecution.

[20:46] Because you see, there's no word here in the letter that these Christians are going to just be enduring this for a season and it's just for now. And in a couple of weeks, a couple of years, it's going to be over.

There was no encouragement like that because very likely these new believers were going to experience persecution all their lives. Many of them were going to experience death because of it. So it wasn't going to end necessarily for them. And we know from history it didn't. And there's no guarantee for us that we're ever going to escape persecution because of our faith.

And so therefore, we need to look out there beyond it and know that right now because of what God is doing in our lives, because what he has done and he has shed his grace and love upon us and has chosen us as his people right now, we're part of that great plan, but the ultimate completion of it is out there in the future and it's way bigger, grander than anything in this life, more glorious than anything that could pertain to this life or that we could hope to have in this life.

That's what he's giving them. That's the best thing they could have. Because there was going to be no end to their persecution. Paul said in Romans 8, 18, he said, for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy, not even worthy, to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us for the, and I like this part, for the earnest expectation, the longing of the creation waits for, longs for the revealing of the sons of God.

[22:52] That is the completion of all this work. that God is doing. All right, so then, having said that, number one, and this will be our focus this morning, God is building us into a spiritual temple.

A spiritual temple. May I read verses 4 and 5 again? Because we've got to get this in our minds if we're going to understand this.

Coming to him as to a living stone. That's Jesus. rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious.

You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house. There it is.

That's the first part of what God's doing in this grand plan. Being built up a spiritual house. And then he goes on from there.

[24 : 01] A holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. There are all three elements there. All three are contained here.

So verses 4 and 5 is really kind of the declaration of this truth. Here's Peter declaring this great truth. Putting it all together really basically in one verse.

All elements of this grand plan. All three are there. Spiritual house or temple. A holy priesthood. An acceptable sacrifice. Do you see that? It's all right there. All there in that one verse.

And then verse 6. You'll notice. Verse 6 I think is where Peter offers the scriptural support for the truth.

It's kind of like a preacher would make a proposition at the beginning of his sermon. It's what I propose. Here's the truth. In a nutshell. Here it is. And then he opens up the Bible and says.

[25 : 01] Here's the support for it. And that's what Peter is doing right here. Because he says there in verse 6. Therefore to you. Excuse me. Verse 6. Therefore it is also contained in the scripture. And then he begins to quote passages of the Bible from the Old Testament.

So here's the scriptural support. And so here's the first part of God's grand plan for his people. He is building them, us up into a spiritual house.

Now everything in the text points here to more than just a mere house. It's not just a house or a building. Not just any common kind of structure. Though the word house is used here, the allusions to the Old Testament and Old Testament prophecy tell us that the idea here is a temple.

A temple. A glorious temple. And there are a number of things that we need to understand about this temple that God is building for his glory of which we're a part.

There are four things as a matter of fact. Number one. And we'll move through a couple of these quickly. First of all, the form of this temple. This temple that God is building.

[26 : 17] The form of it. Verse 5. He says that it is a spiritual house. Do you see that? That's key in our understanding.

We're not talking here about God building a building for himself, a temple for himself that's made out of brick and mortar. This is not a material thing, not a physical thing.

This is a spiritual thing that God is building. He's already started it and it's represented by many of you right here. The temple of the Holy Spirit. And he's already started that and he is building it and ultimately in a grand kind of consummation of it all, God is building for himself a spiritual house, a spiritual temple.

And we know it's spiritual because God is spirit. Not physical. That's interesting to me in contrast to that. It seems that the church today is more interested in physical temples, aren't we?

Anything wrong with having a building like this and having it nicely decorated? I'm not saying that, but it does seem like certainly many of God's people are more interested in the grand and elaborate church building than they are interested in the very temple of God.

[27 : 39] And we get very excited about those things and we build these great physical temples. But listen, God is not so much interested in our material houses and churches and temples.

He's really not. You say, well, what about way back there when Solomon built the first temple and it was, you know, the wonder of the world? And it was and it needed to be and God made sure that it was that way.

Why? Because he's interested in a physical temple? No, he was interested in what it was picturing. Something grander than anything that could be built on this planet. So get out of your minds that God is interested in material temples.

He's not. In fact, the Bible says in Isaiah 66 in verse one, thus says the Lord, heaven is my throne. The earth is my footstool. That sound like God is interested in us building a temple that could hold him.

Not at all. I mean, this whole earth is just his footstool. And he goes on to say, where's the house or the temple that you will build me?

[28 : 48] And where is the place of my rest? And then one verse later, he says, but on this one will I look. As you can't build me a temple that'll house me.

Because the real temple is the one upon whom I look. Who's poor. Spiritually poor. And of contrite spirit. And who trembles at my word. That's his temple. Spiritual. It's not physical. The temple that is part of God's grand plan is spiritual. And it is already represented here today. Not by this building. It's represented by you.

By you. And by me. individual believers in Christ. It's already in a in a microcosm representation of the bigger picture.

[29 : 54] It's already represented right here by individual believers. And that isn't that what Paul said in first Corinthians 6 19. Or do you not know that your body is the temple, the temple of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God and you are not your own.

Right now it's represented right here by individual believers. But one of these days we will all be united together into one temple, the church universal.

One day that will be realized. And we're all all believers will be a part of that. These believers who were being persecuted over there in Asia Minor to whom Peter was writing and trying to encourage and trying to instruct and and to help along theologically.

They're going to be united with Highland Park Baptist Church. The members of this church that is true members of Christ. And we're all going to be one church universal.

I don't think there's a universal church yet. There was there is one in in the future. Right now the church is represented by you and me and the church is the assembly of the firstborn.

[31 : 12] We're we're we're a local body, a local church. And there's a couple down this way and down that way and down this way in Bartlesville and beyond Bartlesville and all throughout Oklahoma and all throughout the United States.

There are local believers, local assemblies, churches. But one of these days it's all those all those church buildings and all those distinctions and barriers are all going to be removed and we will be one temple.

One church. The form of it is spiritual. Second notice the founder. And I might say the framer of this temple.

It's God the Father. You see there verse six as Peter is quoting the Old Testament. Who's speaking here?

Well not the prophet. Not a mere man. God is speaking. And what did he say? Verse six. I lay in Zion.

[32 : 25] A chief cornerstone. I do that. That passage clearly identifies the builder, the founder and framer of this holy construction.

Identifies it as God himself. God is the builder. Now Zion there in that passage. I lay in Zion.

It's another word for Jerusalem. Jerusalem. Jerusalem. The city of God. And you remember, don't you?

That it was in Jerusalem. We're just outside the city walls. At a place called Golgotha. where God laid the cornerstone of his temple.

The very foundation stone of his temple. The chief cornerstone. Right? Just outside the city gates of Jerusalem. Some two thousand years ago, God laid the cornerstone for his church.

[33 : 37] I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone. Cornerstone. And that leads us then thirdly to the foundation. Now we need to spend a little more time on it.

The foundation of his temple, this temple, and it is of course Jesus. It's God the Son. It's Jesus Christ. And the idea that Jesus is the foundation stone for God's temple runs throughout this text. Indeed, it runs throughout the Bible. Peter identified him first as the living stone. You see that, don't you, in verse 4?

The living stone. Now, this is not the first time that the Messiah is referred to in Scripture as a stone or a rock. In fact, you go all the way back to Genesis 29, verse 24, and you find Jacob lying there on his deathbed, and he is speaking of the coming Messiah.

He calls him the shepherd. And he says of the shepherd that he is the stone of Israel. So there's the word there.

[34 : 52] There's the identification, kind of the metaphor. He's the stone. Years later, Moses, in Deuteronomy 32, in verse 4, he said that the Messiah is the rock.

Stone. Rock. Later, David would call him, in 2 Samuel 23, in verse 3, the rock of Israel. So he's the stone of Israel.

He's the rock, Moses said. He is the rock, or the, yeah, the rock of Israel. And then the Apostle Paul, we get on into the New Testament, and the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he connects Jesus to the rock in Moses' day, you remember, that provided the water for thirsty Israelites.

And he said, and all in that day drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank of the spiritual rock. And they did, remember?

First Moses struck the rock, and he gave forth water, and the people drank. And later he, well, he first strikes it, but then he speaks to it, because that's what God called him to do, commanded him to do, and he speaks to the rock, and it issues forth water.

[36:09] And Paul says, they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and then he identified who that rock was. He said, and that rock was Christ.

You see, the theme runs throughout the Bible. 1 Corinthians 10, 4, by the way. Now, Peter then calls Jesus the living stone. That's who he's referring to, Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ.

He's the living stone, and Peter chose his word here very carefully. He used the Greek word lithos, a word that could mean just any old stone, a rock, but primarily it is used in reference to a building stone.

Alright, so he's talking about a building stone. We can kind of picture that. And then he precedes the word rock, or lithos, with a word, it's really a participle, living.

Though used as an adjective here. He's the living stone. And the word that is used there, we can trace all the way back to its root, its noun form is zoe, and we've heard that word before, haven't we?

[37:28] Zoological, zoos, zoe, means life. So, this is not just a stone that is lifelike, not just a stone that appears to be alive, this is a living stone, and it's paradoxical, isn't it?

I mean, when you think about it, there's hardly anything in this world that's more indicative of death than a rock. Beg your pardon if you have a pet rock at your house. Do you remember when those came out?

Alright. Who has a pet rock? Raise your hand. Who had one years ago? Yeah, a couple, two, three, four, five. Interesting. Pet rock.

Did yours have eyes on it? And a mouth? I mean, think of the entrepreneurial genius of the guy who came up with that idea. Get a common old rock out of the creek bed and sell it for, I don't know how much you paid for yours.

You probably are embarrassed to tell me. And it may have had eyes painted on it, mouth painted on it, maybe it had a little outfit on it, however it was for you, and you could speak to it, but it wouldn't speak back to you.

[38:45] If it did, you'd need some serious counseling. Eyes, but it couldn't see, ears, couldn't hear, mouth, it couldn't speak. They didn't have legs, I didn't see any with any, but they couldn't move around, they just sat there, they just rocked.

You go back, kind of harkens back to the Old Testament days, really not just Old Testament days, but in our days as well, where men and women bow down and worship idols made out of stone, and the Bible says they have eyes but they cannot see, and ears, they cannot hear, and mouths, they cannot speak, they might have feet but can't walk, and hands, they can't help, just rocks, they're dead, and so how could we have a living rock, huh?

It's a paradox. well, you know that the idea here is that Jesus is the living stone because of his resurrection, because he truly lives.

He's the rock of Israel. He's the stone of Israel. He is the rock as Jacob and Moses and David and later Paul and all of them identifying him with the rock, but he's a living rock because he does live. He is alive because of his resurrection and it is, by the way, for that reason that when you believed, you were, as 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 3 tells us, you were born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

[40:17] He is the living stone and that's where Peter begins with this kind of theme of Jesus being the rock. It's a living stone. Peter also called him a chief cornerstone and this is very important.

Now, here in verse 6 where he called him a chief cornerstone, he actually is quoting, quoting loosely by the way from Isaiah chapter 29 verse 6 or 28 verse 16.

Preachers can quote the Old Testament loosely sometimes. I think that's what Peter's doing. But he's inspired by the Holy Spirit, so he's okay. When your pastor quotes loosely from the Old

Testament, he may not be so okay.

But Peter's kind of quoting loosely, not quoting every word, word for word, it's not verbatim from Isaiah 28 16, which says, by the way, therefore, thus says the Lord God, behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried, or tested stone, a precious, he says.

That means costly, cornerstone, a sure foundation. This is what Isaiah's prophecy says. A sure foundation, or a foundation that is firmly, securely laid.

[41 : 44] And that is Jesus. That's him. He is the chief cornerstone. He is the sure foundation that cannot be moved. Like Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3, in verse 11, for no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, is laid, you didn't lay him, God did, is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

And so, see, how important is the cornerstone to any structure? It's very important, especially in the days when all buildings were made out of stone. That cornerstone was crucial.

Now, it's interesting that here in the text that the word that Paul used, the Greek word that he used, Peter rather, used, that's translated cornerstone, is really a kind of a compound word.

And the two words that make up the one word seem to be kind of contradictory. Let me explain. There's part of the word, in fact, it's the front part of the word, that really means coping stone, or capstone.

That is, it's talking about a stone that goes on top, that holds things together, that crowns it, or caps off the structure.

[43 : 05] The last half of the word is the word that means a stone at the corner, or cornerstone. And so, which is it? Is Jesus the cornerstone? Capstone? Or is he the capstone?

Well, in a sense, he's both. Really? Isn't he? In a sense, he's both. He is the strength, the foundation of this building, and the glory of it.

He's the head of it. He caps it off. In a sense, like a coping stone does, many of them, it holds the building together. And so, the building is built properly because it starts with the right foundation, and it's held together properly because it has the right kind of coping stone or capstone.

It's kind of interesting. Though, having said all of that, it's clear that Peter means the cornerstone. And the cornerstone is so important because it's the cornerstone that sets the standard for the rest of the building.

So that, so much so that if the cornerstone is out of plumb, its angles are not right, not true, then, if the building is built upon it, everything about the building will be untrue.

[44 : 32] and unsure and out of plumb. All the angles of that cornerstone set, the lines and angles for the building.

See how important that is? That's why the prophet said he is a foundation securely laid, a precious tried cornerstone.

Peter also identified Jesus as the stone which the builders rejected. Sadly, he's also identified that way.

The stone which the builders rejected, there in verse 7. You see that? Now this is a reference to Psalm 118. In fact, let me read it to you.

Psalm 118, really starting with verse 21. The psalmist says, I will praise you for you have answered me and have become my salvation.

[45 : 40] And then here's the quote or the part that Peter's quoting. The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. stone. This was the Lord's doing.

It is marvelous in our eyes. So there is what Peter is quoting. Rejected.

The stone the builders rejected. And he also said there in verse 4, rejected indeed of men. That is, the living stone was rejected indeed of men.

And then when Peter says, now let's go back to scripture and give the support for this. And he quotes Psalm 118, verse 22. He's saying that this is the stone which the builders rejected.

Now in both cases, both places where the word rejected is found, it is a word that means to disqualify someone after a close examination.

[46 : 43] That's what the word means. Not just simply rejected. In fact, it's why I like the King James version better here. And if you have a King James, you'll notice that the word there is disallowed. That's the idea here.

And in the immediate sense, the immediate reference here is to the Jewish leaders who examined and scrutinized the Lord Jesus Christ before he was crucified.

In fact, through the years, the short years of his ministry, these Jewish leaders, scribes and priests and high priests and other leaders were examining him and being critical of him and they were putting him to the test, giving him a close scrutinizing.

And so it refers to them and after they tested him, they disallowed him. That is, they disallowed him, rejected him as their Messiah. He's not the one. According to their standard, according to their measurement, they scrutinized him.

He's not the one and they crucified him. And so in immediate sense, Peter's referring to that. But ultimately, it applies to all who reject Christ as their Messiah.

[47 : 56] It applies to all unbelievers. And so unbelievers, Jesus says, or Jesus is rather, verse 8, look here, verse 8, Jesus is not a precious stone, but he is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.

Now, to understand that passage, we need to go back to the Old Testament book of Daniel. Now, he's not quoting Daniel, but in a sense, he is, kind of in the third person, and we'll get to that in a minute.

We have to go back to Daniel chapter 2. And if you remember about Daniel chapter 2, that is where the prophet is interpreting King Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Because, you know, the king Nebuchadnezzar, he dreamed, his dream consisted of a statue.

Remember that passage? A statue made out of all kinds of different material.

A huge statue, which Daniel interpreted, because God gave him the interpretation, interpreted this statue as representing the kingdoms of the world.

[49 : 11] Not only the kingdoms already passed and existing in Daniel's day, but looking out into the future all the way to the end of this age, to the kingdoms that will one day come.

And he gives the statue, portrays the kingdoms of the world in their chronological or historiographical sequence from head all the way down to the ten toes of the statue.

And we're not going to get into that, but you know about that. And so, Daniel is interpreting the dream, and he said this to King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 2.

He said, You watched while a stone was cut out without hands. You imagine that, can't you? The idea is a big outcropping of rock in the side of a mountain, and without any human hands involved, any human making, the rock becomes dislodged from that mountain.

He says, You saw, this was part of his dream, you saw that, that, so to speak, boulder rolling down the hill, and which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.

[50 : 29] Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer.

The wind swept them away without leaving a trace, but the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth, which I believe is a reference to the millennial kingdom. the rain of the church that will reign with Christ in that thousand year reign, a rock that grows and fills the whole earth.

Now, how is this important here? Well, what Peter gives us here in verse 8 is really a quote from Jesus. Jesus made an application of Daniel chapter 2, Daniel's prophecy, he applied that to himself, to Christ.

In Matthew chapter 21 and verse 42, listen to this. Jesus said, have you never read in the scriptures?

[51 : 55] By the way, let me make sure we understand, set this up, he's speaking to the Jewish leaders right after he gives this parable about a master's vineyard and how he turned the vineyard over to some servants, some farmers, and then he went into a far country, and then later he sends some servants to check on the work and to get the fruit of his vineyard, and the farmers there, they kill the servants.

He sends some more, and they kill them too. That represents the prophets. And then he sent his own son, and they killed him too, took him outside the vineyard and murdered him.

That's a picture of the cross. And Jesus then turns to those who are examining him, and said, now what should be done about these farmers here in the vineyard?

And they say they ought to be killed. And so then Jesus says, have you never read the scriptures? The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

[53:13] And whoever falls on this stone will be broken, but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder. Now this is a little complicated, but this is what Peter is referring to.

What Jesus said. And how does Peter apply that here? He applies it to unbelievers. who are those who are disobedient there in verse 7.

Really it's disbelieving. Who because of unbelief have disobeyed the gospel. Verse 8, they stumble being disobedient to the word and who because of their unbelief and disobedience will receive God's judgment.

That's what he's referring to here. judgment. That judgment. Verse 8, and I like the New American Standard translation, to this doom they were also appointed.

Appointed to what? Judgment. They weren't appointed to unbelief. God did not decree the unbelief of the lost.

[54:36] But he did decree their punishment. And it's appointed to them. That is the penalty for rejection of Christ is judgment.

That's his decree. But now let me add very quickly that this living stone, this chief corner stone, this foundation stone of God's house was rejected by men, rejected by unbelievers.

But, verse 4, chosen, elect, chosen by God and precious, this corner stone. You see, God the Father also examined the same Jesus that the priests and Jewish leaders examined.

And they examined him and scrutinized him and rejected him. But God's examination was quite different. In fact, in Mark 1 and verse 11, he says, you are my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.

So you see, we're talking about God's grand plan. He is building a temple for himself, for his glory. And its construction is well underway.

[55:45] And you and I are part of that. Its form is spiritual. Its founder and framer is God the Father. Its foundation is Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone, chosen, elect, tried, precious, sure, firm.

And then finally, there is the framework of this temple. And that is you and me, the redeemed of the Lord.

Verse 6, living stones being built up. Or rather, verse 5. See, listen, it's compelling to note that the only difference between living stone in verse 4 and living stones in verse 5 is one is singular and the other is plural.

That's the only difference between the two. And the idea is the believer's oneness with Christ. The theological terminology would be union or spiritual union with Christ.

Another way of putting it would be that this whole building, this temple that God is building, represents the mystical body of Christ. That is the entire body of the elect in Christ.

[57:04] He is the foundation. We are the stones built upon Him. He is the living stone. And we are the living stones.

That is through union with Him, His death and burial and resurrection. We are living stones being built up. Is this important? Some of you are still wondering.

It is important. Very important. Is this what the readers, Peter's readers needed? Absolutely.

Remember how Peter opened this letter.

He opened it by designating those to whom he was writing and he said to those who reside as aliens, scattered. He was writing to in another translation put this way to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion.

We could use the word strangers, aliens, exiles. Peter was writing to these aliens and because of their severe persecution, I believe that they were wondering if they were not also alienated from God and the rest of God's people out there in the backside of nowhere, enduring persecution.

[58:21] Are they still connected with God, still connected with what God's doing through His people and in His church? And they were beginning to question that. But no, Peter assures them you are part of something big, something really big, something grand.

Like Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers. We read this together a moment ago. Ephesians 2, 19. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers, no longer aliens, foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostle and prophets, that is, upon the gospel and the prophets, built upon that, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone in whom the whole building being fitted together is growing into a holy temple, a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in

the Spirit.

I tell you, this is, this is big. Big, big, big, bigger than the things that happen in our little puny lives, the struggles we have, and the challenges of this life.

It's much bigger. We're part of it. Now, I need to bring this to a close this morning. Those who are part of this plan, who are they?

[60:32] Verse 4, Peter says, they are the ones who have come to Jesus, to the living still.

And this word come does not mean come and find out, or come and see if He's the right one.

The word He used here means to draw near and to remain there. The idea is to come for salvation, to be saved.

That's how you become a part of this grand plan, is through salvation. Paul used the same word in Hebrews 10, 22, when He said, draw, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

And dear people, that's the question for some of you here this morning. Have you come to Christ? That's the question.

[62:05] Have you come to Christ with a true heart, with full assurance of faith? That is what Jesus asked you to do.

He said, come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden.

I will give you rest. you The End