

**REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE!**  
**We are the true temple of God!**

**Intro: Do you remember what it was that made Peter fail the Lord the night of His betrayal? It was a reluctance or unwillingness to admit to who he was!**

**Peter didn't want Jesus' disciples to make that mistake! And so he places before his readers a clear picture of who they are and urges them to see both the blessing and the responsibility connected with their identity in Christ.**

**In chapter one Peter has stressed to his readers that they are God's family; and as God's family, they have both great blessings (1:3-12) and great responsibilities which Peter details (1:13-2:3).**

**But there remain other ways for Peter to help disciples see their unique place in this world; and so he continues to urge them to remember who they are! Let's read our next section:**

*And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed." This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone," and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense" ;for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Pet. 2:4-10)*

**Certainly we probably shouldn't tackle all of this text in a single lesson; but I've read it all to stress Peter's big picture view. Notice the "you are" theme. "You are being built up as a spiritual house." "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." "You were...but now you are the people of God." "You have received mercy." Peter wants his readers to understand who they are!**

**Second notice that Peter stresses three ideas with his eye upon the OT Scriptures: He sees the NT church as the fulfillment of the OT economy. First, They are the true temple of God. Second, they are the true covenant people of God. We'll consider each of the ideas in a separate lesson.**

**Christians are the true temple of God.**

*If you had asked a Jew in Peter's day to point out the most special building*

***in his world, there is no doubt as to what his answer would be! The temple!***

The temple symbolized God's choice of Israel to be His people and to dwell among them.

It was the house where worshippers came to offer their sacrifices and worship Him through them.

Originally God's dwelling had been a tent similar to that in which the Israelites lived as they journeyed toward the Promised Land. But eventually Solomon would build a glorious permanent structure.

Though that temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, it was later rebuilt and in the time of Herod restored to an impressive beauty. It was the pride and glory of Jerusalem in Peter's day.

But Peter had come to understand that the OT tabernacle/temple was only a foreshadowing of a much greater one, a spiritual house made up, not of physical stones, but of people.

*And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 2:4-5)*

Notice these points:

***The church is built up as a spiritual house.***

Peter uses a construction metaphor. "House" here refers to a temple structure, which serves as a dwelling for the deity.

Peter is not speaking about buildings which the church sometimes builds to meet in. They are not "God's house." The people are God's house. The church doesn't "go to" God's house; they "are" God's house wherever they go.

God's NT "house" is a spiritual house. This distinguishes it from the physical temple; and it reminds us that it is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit who makes us who we are.

Jesus is the "chief corner stone" in this temple.

The Jewish apostles were quite aware of the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah by their fellow-Jews.

Consequently they often spoke of Him in the words of prophecy and of Jesus Himself as *"the stone which the builders rejected."* In this case the builders who rejected Jesus are the Jewish unbelievers. However He was the one chosen by God to be the *"chief corner stone"* of His new covenant temple in which He has chosen to dwell.

Thus Peter writes: *"And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God.."* (1 Pet. 2:4)

Every Christian is a living stone in the house of God.

Notice how Peter begins: *"and coming to Him, as to a living stone."*

To be a part of this temple, we must first accept Jesus; we must come to him in faith.

And that is for Peter the bright-line distinction between the old Israel and the new Israel.

And then Peter finishes, *"you are being built up as a spiritual house."*

Peter uses the present passive tense. It is action that is ongoing and not completed. This temple began to be built at Pentecost, was being built in Peter's day and will continue to be built in our time. The reality is that the greatest temple that the world has ever known is not yet finished. It will continue to be built until Jesus comes again.

It is made up of all those who have been added one by one to the structure as living stones until it is complete.

Peter's picture comports perfectly with the teaching of Paul as well:

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Eph. 2:19-22)*

*Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. (1 Cor. 3:16-17)*

The church then is the fulfillment of that to which the tabernacle and temple pointed. We are the spiritual temple of God. If only we could just keep remembering who we are!

### **Christians are for a spiritual priesthood...**

*If you could ask the ancient Jews what was the most important building, he would have said the temple; but if you could have asked him who is the most privileged person in Israel, he would have answered the priests. For they are closest to God; they alone can enter the holy place and serve in behalf of the people.*

*We are a holy priesthood!*

*And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 2:4-5)*

What cannot be true in the physical world, can be true in the spiritual world. In a physical temple, the temple cannot also be the priests; but in the spiritual realm, Christians can not only be the temple; they can also be the priesthood that serves in that temple. And this is precisely Peter's point. We are a holy priesthood!

It was this truth—the priesthood of all believers-- that was lost to the religious world for many centuries. Even today Roman Catholicism separates the “priests” from the “people”. What a precious truth it is that every Christian has access to God through Christ without the aid or need of any mediator other than Christ.

Just as God stressed to the OT priests the holy role they had, so also we are a "holy" priesthood, consecrated to God for service and living holy lives.

### ***We offer up spiritual sacrifices***

The house is "for a priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices"

They are not sacrifices of atonement, Jesus has offered that once for all; but they are sacrifices of thanksgiving and total commitment.

*I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Rom. 12:1)*

Our very lives become an offering to God; but more specifically what the Spirit produces in us becomes a "spiritual sacrifice" to God.

And so when the church at Philippi sent help to Paul as an act of love and support for the gospel he wrote back:

*But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. (Phil. 4:18)*

When the Hebrew writer contemplates the sacrifices of God's NT priesthood he describes them this way:

*Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (Heb. 13:15-16)*

These sacrifices are "*acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*"

Any offering that is not accepted is worthless; but Christians can be assured that their offerings are acceptable or well-pleasing to the Lord.

What makes that possible is the intercession of the one whose blood has cleansed the tabernacle in which we serve and who makes our entry into the holy place possible through His forgiveness; otherwise we could offer no acceptable sacrifice because it would be made unclean with the guilt of our sin.

***And so we are not only God's true temple; we are also His true priesthood. If only, we would keep remembering who we are!***

### **Applying Peter's message**

**The truths Peter reveals about our identity can help us in a lot of ways.**

First it gives us a reason to never be ashamed. We are living stones in the greatest temple ever built on earth to offer the greatest worship ever offered to any God.

Second to understand who we are is also to know how we should live each day. If we are holy priests, then we should live holy lives, filling them with holy sacrifices to God. Our whole life is an offering to God designed to bring glory to Him; and in it are specific expressions of that holiness in worship and service to others.

To understand the spiritual nature of our calling is to realize that there should be no need nor desire to practice the rituals of the shadow when we are in fact the substance to which the shadow pointed (Animals sacrifices, lighting the menorah, burning incense, eating showbread, praising with instrumental music, observing holy days, distinguishing between clean and unclean foods have given way to the spiritual sacrifices that flow from our hearts to God and others day by day). What God seeks from us is to be what Jesus called "true worshippers" who worship Him in spirit and in truth.

**Conclusion: Live each day mindful of who you are! It will change the way you live.**