

The Ultimate Honour

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[0 : 00] Every city in the world, every community, both ancient and I guess modern, is constituted or comes together around some kind of cultural establishment.

Some place where people are gathered together, where identities are formed, and where culture is distributed from. So every city, every culture comes together around some kind of cultural establishment.

In the ancient world, a small town may have been the marketplace or the public town square. Or think of some of the big cities. You think of Rome, they had the Colosseum. People would gather, Romans' identity was formed and culture was distributed.

Or think of the city of London 100 years ago. Everyone used to talk about going down to the city, which is where Westminster and the Houses of Parliament, the inner part of London itself, was kind of the establishment of London.

Think of New York. What comes to mind when you think of New York? Times Square. And in Hong Kong, we very creatively called the place where we gather Central.

[1 : 09] I'm sure we could have come up with a more original name, but Central it is. But every nation, every city has some place that is central to who they are and where people gather.

Where people gather together, identities formed, and from which culture is distributed. In the ancient nation of Israel, this place was the temple. The temple.

Everything that Israel was, all of their identity was shaped by the temple. In this morning's passage that Jefferson and John read to us, we're going to see that Christ is building His church.

And what we're going to see this morning is that Christ's house, His church, or the church is Christ's house, which follows Christ's example, which is built on the foundation of who Christ is for the praise of Christ's name.

But in order to understand this passage in 1 Peter 2, we need to understand something about this temple, this center of Israel's life.

[2 : 16] And so we're going to take a few minutes to explore the Old Testament story of the temple, and then we're going to get to our passage. Okay, that's where we're going today. So, as I said, throughout Scripture, the nation of Israel, this temple was so central.

It was where commerce generally took place. It was where legal disputes took place and legal arguments were fought. It was where families came for blessing and children came for blessing. It was an economic hub. It was a spiritual hub. Everything happened around the temple. And the reason for this, there are many reasons, but the primary reason for this is because the temple is where God's presence was said to dwell, where His glory was made manifest.

Remember, the nation of Israel wasn't defined primarily by their national borders. It wasn't defined primarily even by their ethnicity, that they were children of Abraham, even though that was a very big part of it.

What defined the nation of Israel was that they were God's chosen people, God's special people, God's holy nation, that God had given them His presence and He made known His glory.

[3 : 23] Remember, in Exodus 33, Moses prays and he says, God, unless Your presence goes with us, don't send us out from here, because unless You go with us, how will the other nations know that we are distinct from them?

This is what distinguishes us from every other nation on the face of the earth, that You, the living God, are with us, that Your presence is with us. And where was God's presence? Primarily in the temple.

And so the temple is absolutely central to all the Israelites, who they were, what they did, and their identity. One little anecdote is the temple in Israel always had to face east.

The entrance was always towards the east. And the reason for this is because when Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, they left out of the east gate. And so in a sense, every time the priests would come back into the temple, it was a way of saying, You're coming back to the Garden of Eden.

You're coming back into God's presence. The temple was the Garden of Eden on earth. Now originally, Israel didn't have a temple. In Moses' day, they had a tent of meeting and then what was called a tabernacle.

[4 : 29] It was a kind of makeshift tent in the wilderness as they were journeying and traveling and pilgrims on their way to the promised land. But even this tent of meeting, this tabernacle, was designed absolutely down to the most minute detail.

God said, This many feet, this many pegs, this many curtains, this many inches for this piece of furniture, this many inches for that piece of furniture. Down to the most minute detail, God was absolutely specific about how this tent was to be built.

And at the end of that, in Exodus 40, when Moses has done everything God commands, it says, There God's glory came and he made himself known in his tabernacle. Fast forward on a few years, the people of God go to the promised land.

And David, the greatest king that Israel ever has, He says, As the crowning moment of his kind of pretty successful reign, He says, I'm going to build God an established house.

I'm going to build the house of the Lord, the temple that will be permanent and he can reside here forever. But God says to him, Your hands are full of blood. You've been involved in too many wars. And so he says, Your son, Solomon, will build it.

[5 : 37] And so Solomon then becomes king after that. And he goes about building the most magnificent temple the world had ever seen. Glorious, covered in gold, magnificent artistry, exquisite design.

Again, down to the most minute detail, Solomon builds this incredible temple. And where the tabernacle was kind of Israel's pride and joy in the desert, the temple is now finally the place where God's presence is going to dwell and God's glory is going to be located.

And it's Israel's crown and joy. But the problem is that just because Israel had a temple, which they loved, didn't mean that they loved the God of the temple. And so pretty soon after that, even in Solomon's only lifetime, Israel's already starting to build other altars to other gods.

And in fact, things get so bad that at one point, a few years later, a thorough search is made in the temple to try and find a Bible.

In fact, they actually don't even know what God's word was. And one day they're cleaning out the temple. There's a whole lot of rubbish that's assembled. It's a big mess. And they stumble across this book and they're like, that's interesting.

[6 : 48] I wonder what this is, right? And they find that it's God's word. And so they read it and they're like, no way. God has spoken to us. Imagine you come to church one day and you bring a Bible. And the elders are like, what's that?

That looks interesting. So this is how bad things have got. The temple, they'd lost God's word. God wasn't speaking to them anymore. And things get from bad to worse. And so eventually God says to them, enough is enough.

I'm going to send Israel into exile and to Babylon. And so in 586 BC, the Babylonians march into town, destroy Jerusalem, sack Jerusalem, and the temple is destroyed.

But the devastating thing is just before this happens, Ezekiel the prophet has a vision. And in his vision, he sees a dream of the glory of God, the presence of God leaving the temple. And so the thing that distressed the Israelites the most as they're in exile in Babylon, wasn't just that Jerusalem was in ruins, it was that their temple was in ruins.

And not just that, but God's presence had left. And so even when they come back from exile, they rebuild the temple. But never again does the Bible tell us that God's presence is back in the temple.

[7 : 55] Never again does God's glory return. And so for the rest of the Old Testament, another 500 years, though God's people do have a kind of temple, God's glory is not there.

God's presence is not there. And Israel's very identity is in jeopardy. Well, they do eventually return from exile and they do rebuild this temple. Ezra is one of the leading guys that kind of gets this going.

And he pulls everybody together and they rebuild this temple. And around that time, Haggai, who's one of the prophets, he has this prophetic word and he says, the glory of this newer temple will be greater than the former temple.

But it seems like Haggai got it wrong because the second temple that they built wasn't nearly as impressive as the first one. It doesn't, it's not as glamorous. It's not as big. It's not as spectacular. It's a real shadow of Solomon's temple. But around 20 BC, so fast forward 400 years later, King Herod decides more for political reasons than anything else.

[8 : 56] Herod decides he's going to restore the temple. He's going to fix it up and spruce it up. And so Herod restores the temple. He gets it fixed up. He actually expands it and makes it bigger and he grows it.

And he does this for political reasons because he knows that if he can restore the temple and national pride, this will maybe push back some of the Roman asserting their authority. So if he can get the Israelites proud of their temple and kind of riled up again, maybe the Romans won't be so strong about coming onto Israel. So Herod politically thinks, let's revive the temple. And so at the time of Jesus' day, the temple actually once again looked pretty marvelous.

It looked pretty magnificent. Remember that at one time Jesus' disciples leave the temple with him and they say to him, Rabbi, look at these stones. Look how amazing and beautiful they look. Doesn't the temple look magnificent? But Jesus says something astounding. Jesus in John chapter 2 says this. He says, pull down this temple and I will rebuild it in three days.

[9 : 57] What's Jesus saying? Jesus is actually fulfilling Haggai's prophecy. He's saying there is a better temple. And it's far grander than anything you've ever seen. But I am that temple.

I am the true temple. I am the true priest. I am the true sacrifice. Everything you've read about in all the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in me. And so in John chapter 1, John says, The word became flesh, that's Jesus, and he dwelt amongst us.

Or he tabernacled amongst us. In other words, his temple came to live amongst us. And we have seen his glory. Well, that's an amazing thing because for 500 years, the people of Israel haven't experienced God's glory.

They haven't experienced God's presence at all. And now John says, here is his glory in our midst. And so D.A. Carson says, God's glory had appeared once again, shining in splendor.

But this time it came, not in the temple, in a man. In a man. This was incredibly difficult for the people of Jesus' day to understand. The temple was so central to everything they were.

[11 : 02] Their identity and who they were as the people of God was found in their temple. And Jesus says, I am here. I am the true temple. Well, with that background, let's look at 1 Peter chapter 2.

Okay? So now remember what our big arching theme is this. The church is Christ's house, following Christ's example, built on Christ the foundation for the praise of Christ's name.

And I've got five points that kind of follow that theme with one little warning thrown in the middle.

Okay? So, firstly, let's dive in. The strange honor of being Christ's house.

Okay? Christ's house. The strange honor of being Christ's house. Look at verse 4 with me. I just lost my place here. Verse 4 says this.

As you come to him, that's Jesus, the living stone, rejected by men, but in the sight of God, chosen and precious, so you yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[12 : 10] So look what Peter's saying. He's saying, as you come to him, God is doing something amazing with you. When you come to God, he doesn't just save you and make you a Christian. He does that, but he doesn't just do that.

He doesn't just save you from hell, though he does do that. God, when you come to him in faith, he actually does something. He makes you, he fashions you like a stone, and he places you in the wall of his temple.

God takes every individual life of every Christ follower, and he's making you part of his house, his building, his temple. As you come to him, you are like living stones being built up into a spiritual house.

In Ephesians 3, Paul says it like this. In the gospel, God is building a brand new house, and Christ is the cornerstone. And in him, you are being built together as a dwelling place for the presence of God.

So everyone in Peter's day knew what the temple was about. The temple was heaven on earth. It was the garden of Eden here on earth. It was the place where God's presence dwelt and where God's Holy Spirit was.

[13:16] It was the place where God made known his glory, okay, literally heaven on earth. And so holy and so glorious and so majestic and so set apart is the temple that no ordinary people can go in there.

If you're from another race, even if you convert to Judaism for 10 generations, you're not allowed to go anywhere near the temple. If you are sick or you're not completely clean, you're not allowed near the temple.

Only certain people of a certain ethnicity, of a certain family are allowed to go into the temple, and only at certain times. So holy, so precious, so magnificent is this temple.

If you go there at the wrong time, you die. And now God says through Peter, This is an incredible honor, incredible privilege that God dwells amongst us and makes his glory known in our midst.

In the book of Nehemiah, there's this amazing little story. Nehemiah comes back to Israel to rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem at the same time that Israel is rebuilding the temple.

[14:33] So after the exile. And he comes back because he hears that the walls have broken down. And so he says, let's rebuild the walls. It's fine for you to build the temple, but if the walls are still broken down, people can attack us and that's not going to help.

So let's rebuild the walls. But the problem is, Israel has been in exile for 70 years. They haven't had masons that are cutting stone or firing bricks. And so there's no good materials around to rebuild this wall.

They need Dwight the contractor to come and bring in new materials. But they don't have Dwight. So what are they going to do? So Nehemiah calls his friends and says, let's go to the rubbish heaps and we're going to find some old burnt stones.

Stones that were once used previously. We'll clean them up. We'll fashion them. We'll maybe chip away. We'll take old burnt stones and we'll use these to rebuild the walls in Israel. Friends, that's exactly what God does with our lives.

He takes our lives that are sometimes burnt, sometimes tarnished with sin. He takes us with our self-centeredness. He takes us with our brokenness. He doesn't wait for us to be perfect. He takes our burnt stones lives and he comes and he says, I'll place in my wall.

[15:38] I'll rebuild my temple. In you, with all your warts and all your failures and all your issues and all your sin, there my glory will reside. I'll send my presence there. And this was an incredible honor.

It's an incredible privilege that God would look at you and at me and say, I'll give my glory to those people. I'll build my temple there. Is there any higher honor? And yet, it's a strange honor.

And it's a strange honor because who is Peter writing to when he writes this? He's writing to Christians and are they feeling very honored? No, they're feeling like outcasts, remember?

Peter's writing this to people that are ostracized and persecuted and rejected because they're Christians. Peter writes this to people that are feeling like the whole world is against them. They're not feeling very honored at all.

They feel like the rejects of society, being cast out. In verse 7, he says, this honor is for you. And the people must have thought, what honor are you talking about? We are the most dishonored, shameful people in the whole of Cappadocia.

[16:39] And yet, it is an honor. One commentator wrote it like this and said, these people, these Christians, were on the receiving end of a barrage of verbal abuse designed to demean them, discredit them, and shame the believers as social and moral deviants, as those endangering the common good.

So people would go to these Christians and say, you Christians, you are bad news for our society. The best thing that should happen is just close down the temple and we should drive you out of here. You're not good for society.

And friends, can I say that in Hong Kong, we haven't got to that stage yet, but it's coming. As in other parts of the world, we're to stick up your hand and say, I'm a follower of Jesus, you will subject yourself to the same verbal abuse.

People look at you and say, you're a moral and social deviant. You're a danger to society. We shouldn't tolerate you here. Your faith is a danger here. And it's coming. It's coming.

But friends, what is our hope? Our hope is that despite all of that, God's gathered people are his treasured possession, his holy temple, where he has chosen to send his presence and reveal his glory.

[17 : 48] And our hope is that this church is not anybody's church. It's Christ's church. It's Christ's church. So the first thing is this, Christ's church. Second point is this.

We follow Christ's example. Now, look at verse four. Why should we not be surprised when hardship and persecution and difficulty follow the life of a Christ follower?

Okay? Just warning you, it's going to come. If it hasn't come yet, it's going to come. Right? Well, look at verse four because Peter tells us. He says, As you come to him, that's Jesus, the living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious, so you yourselves are like living stones being built up into the spiritual house.

Okay? So this is what he's saying. He's saying, you are no different from your master. Just remember Jesus. Jesus, he was this living stone, the living stone, and yet he was rejected by men. Do you expect anything different to happen to you? Isn't this what Jesus said? Jesus said, if they persecuted me, you can be sure that they will persecute you. You see, friends, when the Christians started to experience this rejection, this persecution, they might have been tempted to think, God, where are you?

[19 : 01] Have you abandoned us? Have you forgotten us? Maybe we took the wrong path and we need to get back on track. And Peter writes to them and say, no, not at all. These hardships that you are experiencing is not because God has rejected you, but the very opposite, because you're cut from the same stone as Jesus.

If Jesus, the chief stone, experienced this, why are you, the living stones that fashioned after him, going to be any different? In chapter 4, Peter writes and he says, friends, don't be surprised when fiery trials come upon you as though something strange were happening to you.

Rejoice because you're sharing in Jesus' sufferings. In other words, rejoice because you're walking in the steps of Christ, your king, Christ, your master. You're cut from the very same stone as him.

Christ's church following Christ's example. Third thing, built on the foundation of Christ, our cornerstone. Look at verse 6 with me.

Are you following? Is that making any sense? Okay, great. Thank you, Simon, for the encouragement. The church is Christ's house, which follows Christ's example.

[20 : 09] Thirdly, built on the foundation of Christ himself. Look at verse 6 here. In verse 6, Peter quotes Isaiah 28, which is actually the scripture that Soda read to us as our call to gather this morning.

And it says this, behold, I'm laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious. Isaiah actually says a stone that's been tested, chosen and precious.

And whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. Friends, the reason why these Christians could endure hardship and suffering and reproach and rejection and difficulty was because this building, which God was making out of these community of believers, was established on a rock-solid, unshakable foundation.

And that foundation had been tested. It's the foundation that has stood the test of time. That foundation is Christ himself. Those who believe in him will not be put to shame.

And Isaiah describes this foundation as the cornerstone. Now, the cornerstone, I'm sure you know this, was a very important stone in a building project, right? It serves two purposes.

[21 : 18] The one is that it's kind of like a foundational stone. It's a stone that had to be very strong because a lot of the weight of the corner and a lot of the weight of the building would rest on the stone.

And so it was placed at the bottom of the building, and it would carry a lot of the weight of the building. It was a foundational stone, and a lot that was built after it was rested on the stone. But the second thing about the cornerstone was that it set the line for where the rest of the walls were to go. So while you're building this wall and you're wondering, am I building straight, am I not straight?

You look to the cornerstone to see, am I still on track? Okay? And so you build according to the cornerstone. And so the cornerstone had to be straight. It had to be honest. It had to be strong. And this is what Peter's saying. He's saying that this house, this temple, this church that Christ is building, this new household of God's people in which God's presence dwells and in which God is

going to make His glory made known, this is not just a ragtag bunch of people that are trying to be religious, a bunch of people that are trying to live a good life and sort of keep things together.
[22 : 22] No, this is a house which is built on a cornerstone. And that cornerstone is Christ Himself. He is our guide. He is our foundation. This church is meant to be built on Him.

And therefore, it's built on an unshakable foundation. And friends, Peter here is talking about the universal church. The church will stand. But it's important for us as a local church to sit up and take note here.

Because, Watermark, the future of our church depends on this question. Will we as a congregation build on Christ and follow His lead?

Will we as a church allow Christ to set the agenda? Will we allow Christ to be the cornerstone of this church? Or will we capitulate and build according to our own desires, our own dreams, our own vision?

What's amazing here is, remember in the Gospels, in Matthew 16, Jesus is talking to His disciples. And at that stage, Peter, His name was still Simon, right?

[23 : 26] And Jesus is talking to His disciples and He says, Who do people say that I am? And they say, some say Elijah, some say this prophet, some say that prophet. And Jesus says, Well, who do you say I am?

And Simon, later called Peter, says, You're the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus says to him, You're right. You are no longer to be called Simon.

You will be called Peter. Now, the word Peter means the rock. Okay? Jesus says, You'll be called Peter, and on this rock I will build my church. Now, some people think, Well, that means that on Peter, the rock, Jesus is going to build this church.

He's going to establish His church on the foundation of Peter's authority. That Peter, this great leader of the church, is the foundation of the church, right? But if there is one place in all of Peter's writings where he could have just slipped that in and said, Just to remind you all, I am the rock, right?

I mean, he's writing all about the stone, the foundation that the church is built on. He could have said, Listen, Jesus is the chief cornerstone, but right next to Him, there's another rock. Just remember, just want to remind you what Jesus said about yours truly.

[24 : 33] Okay? He could have reminded them. Peter doesn't mention a single thing. He doesn't mention himself once. Why? Because there's one rock. There's one foundation.

The church is not built on personality. It's not built on charismatic leaders. It's not built on any entertainment or anything. It's built on one foundational stone.

The cornerstone that has been tested, chosen, and is precious. That has stood the test of time. The cornerstone of Jesus Christ. It's Christ's church, following His example, built on Christ Himself. And friends, can I let you into a little secret in my own heart? Okay? If we can just keep this to ourselves, just the 200 of us. Okay? But honestly, I really am deeply worried about the state of the church in the world.

And Hong Kong, we're not that bad, but the temptation is still here. And the reason is, in every church, in every age, the temptation is to find some other cornerstone, some other foundation upon which to build the church.

[25 : 37] To build it on celebrity leaders. To build the church on personality. To build the church on entertaining kids ministry or entertaining speakers. To put on a world-class show where church members are well entertained.

But friends, what makes the church the church is that it's God's people that are gathered in God's name. And God's presence is there for the glory of His name with Christ as the foundation. And this means that when we assemble in Christ's name, we love and serve each other like Christ would. It means we forgive one another that Christ would. It means we deal with sin and repentance like Christ would have us do it.

It means that when a brother sins against us, we forgive them like Christ would have us do it. It means we point one another back to Christ. Because Christ is the foundation of this church.

Charles Spurgeon tells a story where one day he goes to a church service.

And the preacher doesn't mention Jesus anywhere. Nothing of Jesus. Nothing of Christ. Nothing of the gospel. Nothing of the blood of the cross. Nothing of Jesus at all.

[26 : 37] It's all moralism and religion and good works. And he walks out and someone says, how did you find church today? And Charles Spurgeon quotes Mary Magdalene at the tomb. And he says, they've taken my Lord Jesus and I know not where they've laid Him.

Friends, may that never be said of us. May people never say of this church, they've taken the Lord Jesus Christ and I know not where they've put Him. May this church forever be built on the one true foundation that is Christ.

In Christ the solid rock we stand, all other ground is sinking sand. Behold, I'm laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious. Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.

And this leads to the fourth point, which is a serious warning. A serious warning. Look at verse 7 to 8 with me. Peter says, this honor of being Christ's temple, Christ's building, Christ's church is for you.

It's a magnificent honor. Strange as it may be because you may not feel honored all the time. But this honor is for you who believe. But for those who do not believe, and then he quotes two scriptures.

[27 : 42] One is Psalm 118, the other is Isaiah 8. And the quotations go like this. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. And secondly, it's become a stone of stumbling, a rock of offense.

Now what's interesting about this is you'd expect Peter to say, you reject Jesus and you're going to burn in hell, fire and brimstone, right? But that's not exactly what he says. He says, if you reject Jesus, it means nothing to Jesus.

Well, let me rephrase that. That's not what I mean. He says, if you reject Jesus, that has no bearing on what happens to Jesus. He still becomes the chief cornerstone.

He's still the glorious one. He's going to build his church. If you reject this cornerstone, what happens is that you find yourself rejected. Okay? Do you see that? He says, the stone the builders has rejected has become the cornerstone.

It wasn't like they rejected it and now it's languishing down in some courtyard somewhere. They rejected it, but the stone is still the cornerstone. It's still standing strong. And they find themselves as the one that have now fallen away and out of the limelight.

[28 : 50] And so this is what he's saying. Those who reject Christ find in the end that it's only themselves that have been rejected. Okay? Does that make sense? Let me give you an analogy. How many of you have seen or heard of Michelangelo's magnificent statue of David?

Anyone seen it? In Florence and Italy, right? Okay. It's an amazing story. 500 years ago, 600 years ago, the committee that oversaw the cathedral in the city of Florence in Italy decides that they need some statues to be built.

And so in 1465, they commissioned this artist. They go and get a magnificent piece of stone cut from the quarries in Tuscany. They bring it to Florence and they commission an artist to carve a statue of David.

Now, this statue is probably the most famous and the most magnificent sculpture or statue ever sculptured. Okay? It's 17 feet tall. So it's the size of kind of three normal men, twice the size of Eric. But it's really big. Okay? 17 feet. That's what? Three meters or something? No, five meters. Okay? So they commissioned this guy.

[29 : 59] We want you to carve us a statue of David. And he starts and pretty soon he abandons the project. He says, I can't work on this thing. And he goes off. And so this piece of magnificent marble is left in some courtyard languishing for 10 years.

10 years later, they go to another artist and they say, listen, we want a statue of David. Will you take this piece of marble and carve us the statue of David? And so this artist starts.

But as soon as he starts, pretty soon at the project, he abandons the project. And the reason is he says this. This marble is a piece of rubbish. It's mediocre. You can never carve anything magnificent out of that.

And to preserve his own name, he walks away from the project. And so this piece of marble, this five meters tall piece of marble, for the next 25 years, is lying in some courtyard in Florence, subject to the weather and the elements.

And so eventually in 1501, the city officials think we better do something about it. And they find this young artist called Michelangelo. He's 26 years old. And they say to him, listen, will you take a stab at this piece?

[31 : 05] And so for the next two and a half years, he works day and night. He works his backside off. And he carves the most magnificent and beautiful and glorious sculpture, probably the most famous sculpture the world has ever seen.

But here's the point. Those that rejected the marble is unfit. Unworthy. Those that thought it's mediocre. There's nothing good about it. Nothing good can come from this piece of marble. In the end, they find the other than themselves rejected.

In the end, it was their names that were rejected from the history books of art history and from time. They reject it as a piece of rubbish. It's mediocre. They think nothing good is going to come out of it. They reject this marble as a waste of time.

And in the end, the marble stands in Italy. And their names are relegated to footnotes in the back of some history book that nobody knows anything about. Friends, this is what Peter is saying.

When you reject Christ, it has no consequence on what happens to Christ. Christ will stand. He will build his church. But the consequence does result in us.

[32 : 06] It does have massive consequences for us. Listen to how New Testament scholar Leonard Gopold put it. He said this. Christ has laid across the path of humanity. In the encounter with him, each person is changed.

One for salvation, another for destruction. One cannot simply step over Jesus and go on about the daily routine and pass him by to build a better future for yourself.

Whoever encounters Jesus is inescapably changed through that encounter. Either one sees him and becomes a living stone, or one stumbles as a blind person over Christ and comes to ruin.

Friends, Peter says there's two building projects going on here. Christ is building his church, or you can build your own temple. One of them is going to stand, and one of them is going to lead to destruction. Friends, which building project are you engaging in?

Are you going to allow yourself to be like refurbished burnstones placed in Christ's temple, built up for his glory, where Christ's presence and his glory resides?

[33 : 09] Well, are you going to step over him and stumble? And in the end, your house is going to be built on sand. It's going to lie flat. I think the greatest example of this is the story of Judas.

Judas hangs about with Jesus, and in the end he says, no, it's not all that he's cut out to be. And he says, let me make some money off walking away from him. And so he goes to the authority and he says, I'll sell you Jesus for 30 silver coins.

They say, sure, and he makes a deal. But later on, he realizes what he's done, and he's changed his mind. And he goes back and he says, I've sold an innocent man. Here, take your coins back. And they say, what is that to us?

You deal with your own problems. And so Judas throws the coins on the ground, and he goes out and he takes his own life. Friends, we build our lives on Christ as a firm foundation, or we build our lives on sinking sand.

Whose building project are you engaging in? Finally, the last point. Christ's church follows Christ's example, built on Christ as the foundation for the praise of Christ's name.

[34 : 11] Look at verse 9 and 10 with me. We're coming into land here. He says, but you, those who have come to Christ, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you're God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. And friends, this is the spectacular and stunning promise for those who do humble themselves and come to Christ, for those who do trust him.

He builds us into a house, and our lives become a statement, a proclamation about the wonder of who Christ is and the glory of his presence. He will do it, but how does he do it?

He does it by taking rebels and sinners like you and me, and he builds us into his house together. He takes rebels and he calls us his chosen people. Amazing.

It's a quote from Isaiah 43 where God is bringing his people back from Babylon, back to Jerusalem, to where his presence is going to be, into his temple, and he says, you are my chosen people. I've chosen you for the praise of my name.

[35 : 23] God takes sinners like you and I that are lost in darkness. He brings us into light and he says, now you will be a statement for the praise of my name. When you come to him, God takes sinners like us and he calls us his royal priesthood.

That's incredible. He takes broken sinners like us that will never be allowed near God's presence, and he says, now you are my royal priests. Friends, we are those that don't just minister to God and to one another.

We minister to a broken world. You see, Peter's audience, tempted as they may have been, the temptation would have been, let's just come to church, and let's just huddle together and minister to one another out of this horrible hostile world, and we'll love and serve one another.

And now Christ says, you are my royal priesthood. I send you out into that world to minister on my behalf for them. That's what priests did. Priests ministered to God's people on behalf of God.

And now he says, I'm going to send you out into the world Monday to Friday while you're at work and you're at home and you're at university and you're at high school. I'll send you out to be my royal priesthood, my people, to minister to the broken and hurting world.

[36 : 34] Friends, Peter says that when we come to him, he takes sinners like us and he makes us a holy nation. The nation of Israel is holy because it had been built on a covenant shed by blood on Mount Sinai.

God says, you are my holy people because you've been built on a covenant shed by blood on Mount Calvary. And in the end, Peter ends the section with a quote from the book of Hosea.

And we'll close with this. The story of Hosea is that God calls this man called Hosea, this prophet, to marry this lady of ill repute, a lady who's a sex worker. And so he says, Hosea wants you to go marry this lady, Goma.

And so he marries her and they have three children. The first one, God says, I want you to call her your son's name Jezreel. Jezreel was a term for judgment and condemnation. He says, because Israel are being judged.

He says, then they have a second child, a daughter. And he says, call that daughter no mercy because Israel have no longer got my mercy. Then they have a third child. He says, call that third child not my people because Israel are no longer my people.

[37 : 40] They are lost in darkness. And then Hosea's wife, Goma, leaves him again. And God says to Hosea, I want you to go and buy back your wife.

Go to the market. Go where people are buying her body. And you go and buy her. And so Hosea goes and he buys her for 30 silver coins. And he brings her back and he says, you are not my wife, but now you'll be my wife.

You don't deserve mercy, but now I'll give you mercy. You'll once again be part of our family. And it's a prophetic picture. It's a picture of the church. God says to you and I that we are like Goma. We've lost our way. We've gone after our own way. We don't deserve mercy and we don't deserve to be God's people. And God says, just like he said to her, he says, You who are no longer my people, now you are my people.

You who deserve no mercy, now I'll call you full of mercy. Why? Because of Jesus. Because of Jesus. Because Christ is building a temple.

[38 : 39] Friends, what is the church? The church is Christ's house. It's built on his foundation. It follows his examples for the praise of his name. That sinners like you and I, those that have been brought from the darkness into his marvelous light.

Those that were once not his people and now his people. May go out into our hurting and broken world and proclaim the marvelous excellencies of who he is. Friends, this church exists for the glory of Christ's name.

And so Christ says to us this morning, This church is my house. Following my example. Built on who I am. Called for the praise of my name.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you God.

We thank you for this incredible privilege. This honor of being your people. God, we think of how in the Old Testament, What an honor it was that people travel for days and weeks to get to your presence.

[39 : 40] To get to your temple. To be close to your presence. And now you say you make us your temple. Your presence and your glory dwell here. Reside within us. God, we ask, won't you sanctify us?

Won't you make us worthy of that title? Won't you help us, Christ, to really, to proclaim your name, Lord God? May we not be a dishonor to you in our city.

Lord, may Christ be made famous. May Christ's name be honored because of us, we pray. God, we ask that you do give us your Holy Spirit. We ask, God, that you do give us your presence, Lord. God, we long for your presence. We don't just want to go through the motions. We want to be a church where your presence dwells and your glory resides. Oh, God, may Watermark be built on Christ, the true cornerstone.

The true foundation. And may we exist, God, all our days for the praise of your name. We pray these things in your name, Christ.

[40 : 41] Amen. Amen.