

August 31, 2025

“Living Stones in a Spiritual Temple”
Lesson 5

1 Peter 2:1-12

Intro

Martin Luther was ordained as a priest in the Catholic church in 1507. About 10 years later, he began to question some of the church’s practices which contradicted what he read in the Bible. This led to him withdrawing from the church and forming churches which were independent from the Catholic church. One of his big objections was the idea that people needed to go to priests for confession and prayer. Luther claimed that all Christians were priests. Any Christian could minister to another in ways that were previously seen as only to be done by priests. This meant that any Christian could effectively pray for another Christian. This teaching became known as the “priesthood of all believers”, which is a central value and teaching of Protestant Christianity. Today’s lesson takes us to one of Luther’s guiding texts.

Read 1 Peter 2:1-12

1. vs. 1: Peter’s use of “therefore” to start chapter 2 shows a connection being made to chapter 1
In that chapter, he described what it means to be born again
Now he begins showing that changes in behaviors and attitudes should follow
He gives here a “vice list” of things true of unbelievers, but not those in Christ
Malice means evil actions intended to harm others
Deceit is a tendency toward general dishonesty
Hypocrisy is playing a role that benefits the self—not being the same all the time
Envy is a bitter spirit that holds a grudge against another’s success or possessions
It is the opposite of gratitude or contentment
Slander is speaking out against another to damage their reputation
It can be seen as a result of being deceitful, hypocritical, and envious
2. vs. 2: Young Christians need different “food” than older Christians
Whichever food is being “eaten”, it should result in spiritual growth
The word “pure” in this verse is the same Greek word as “deceit” in vs. 1 with a twist
The letter “a” is put before the word here in verse two
This “a” shows the opposite, like “political” and “apolitical”
This usage shows that human deceit and the Word of God are complete opposites
3. vs. 3: Peter’s readers have experienced salvation, they have “tasted that the Lord is good”
One taste of a good thing usually leads to a desire to taste it again
Young Christians start with milk, but they should advance to meat at some point
God desires that all His children progress toward maturity
4. vs. 4: This verse is all about who Jesus is and how that impacts us
He is the “living Stone”—Jesus quoted this OT verse in Matt. 21:42 about Himself
Jesus is the fulfillment of OT prophecies, showing Him to be the Messiah
Jesus was rejected by humanity when He was crucified
However, God chose Jesus to be the Savior, to reconcile man to God

Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection now form the foundation of Christianity
Who Jesus is and what He did make Him "precious" to God the Father
Because Jesus did this work of reconciliation, we can now come to God ourselves
We don't need a priest, but are called to come into His presence (Heb. 10:19-22)

5. vs. 5: Jesus is the foundation, the cornerstone, but He is not the entire building
Peter says Christians are "living stones...being built into a spiritual house"
We are a part of the building, the Church
Peter goes on to say in this verse that we are "a holy priesthood"
In the OT system, the priests were the ones who offered sacrifices
Here Peter notes that we who are priests offer "spiritual sacrifices", like the OT priests
The priesthood and the temple aren't gone; they have been transformed
Christians now are priests serving the great High Priest, Jesus Christ
6. vs. 6: Peter quotes Isaiah 28:16, about Jesus being a "chosen and precious cornerstone"
This is not just any stone; it is one which is both chosen (intentional) and precious
The cornerstone was the first one laid in a new foundation
It had to be absolutely level on all sides for the building to be structurally sound
It also had to be without defects, to eliminate the possibility of cracking
A plumb line was used to make sure it was vertically straight
Trays of water were used to make sure it was horizontally level
7. vs. 7: Peter continues with another OT verse, this one from Ps. 118:22
This OT verse notes that unbelievers will reject this cornerstone
This is a prophecy about those who rejected Jesus as the Messiah
Peter begins the verse by noting that "to you who believe, this stone is precious"
His audience has come to faith in Christ, and Him alone
They see Jesus and His sacrifice as precious
They are not of those that have rejected Jesus
8. vs. 8: The first two phrases in this verse are a quote from Isaiah 8:14
In Hebrew poetry, parallel lines are often used like here; the two lines mean the same
"The stone that causes people to stumble" and "the rock that makes them fall"
The two phrases are equal / parallel
Paul quotes this same passage from Isaiah in Romans 9:33
In 1 Corinthians 1:23, Paul directly connects the crucified Christ as this stumbling block
Note that Peter says they fall because "they disobey the message"
They don't come when Jesus calls—they disobey the gospel message of salvation
9. vs. 9: Peter echoes his thoughts from vs. 5 previously about the status of God's people
They are both "a royal priesthood" as show before, and also a "chosen people"
This isn't because of anything the people or the church collectively have done
God has selected (chosen) those who chose to obey the gospel message
In OT Israel, those of the royal family were separate / distinct from those in the priesthood
That differentiation is gone in the New Testament times up to now
Christians are royalty because we are brothers and sisters of King Jesus
We are also priests because we are called to intercede for each other

He continues by calling Christians “a holy nation”

This shows Peter is referring to all Christians as a collection

God made OT that applied to the whole nation, not just to one individual

That idea is at work here; all these terms refer to everyone in Christ

Because of God’s calling and promises, the church has two titles here

We are to be “a holy nation”

We are “God’s special possession”

10. vs. 10: Here Peter refers to multiple verses from Hosea chapters 1 and 2

The original application of those verses dealt with Israel’s spiritual adultery

They had been worshipping false idols rather than the true God

Gentiles in the OT weren’t part of God’s covenant relationship unless they were converts

But now because of Jesus, they are in a changed status

They are now “the people of God” who have “received mercy”

God’s provision for salvation has shown a forgiving mercy to a rebellious people

11. vs. 11: Peter begins this verse with an endearment: “dear friends”

These people aren’t just people in another city; they are friends whom he cares for

It is much easier to take corrective advice from someone who you care about

He reminds them that they are “foreigners and exiles”

They have a citizenship in heaven—they are only visiting in this world

As such, they are to avoid the “sinful desires” of this life

This is for two reasons:

They are foreigners—the things of this world are not of their lives now

Second, these sinful desires “wage war against your soul”

Why do something that hurt you?

The immoral rules and standards of this world are not to be part of their lives

12. vs. 12: Peter ends this passage with an encouragement

Live lives that give outsiders no ammunition to attack the church

If all strive to live the way Peter urges, there will be no hypocrites to attack

Peter is concerned for the reputation of the church as well as the individuals

Those outside the church family should see only the “good deed” of the church

This will cause them to glorify God, to show respect and admiration for it

“The day he visits us” could mean at least one of two things

It could be the Day of Judgment, like the OT “Day of the Lord”

It could also be the day an unbeliever is convicted by the Holy Spirit

The good deeds of the church are seeds planted for later growth

Application: There are many things Peter tells Christians to do and be in this passage, but the most important by far is to be a “priest” to other Christians. That means ministering to them and interceding for them to God. We don’t need anyone’s permission to do this. We are children of the King, a “royal priesthood”. We are called to serve others the way Jesus would serve them. We are also called a “holy nation”, people who strive to follow God’s will. We seek to do this as those redeemed from the curse of sin by the death of Jesus on the cross.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for Jesus being the cornerstone and foundation upon which all our faith is built. We desire to be loyal to You in order to serve Your will for this world. Thank you for making us priests so that we can help each other spiritually, and take our concerns and theirs straight to Your throne without needing someone else to do it, or someone else's permission to do it. Thank you for making us stones in Your church to bring glory to Your name. In Jesus' name, Amen.