



#3 In the Hope Series  
The Cornerstone of HOPE  
Forest Park Church  
March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Palm Sunday  
By Jason Corder

It was the final week of the life of Christ. Jesus was teaching and preaching in the temple courts. The religious authorities of Israel had categorically rejected Jesus. They had declared Him a blasphemer, and they were plotting His death by crucifixion with the help of the Romans.

**Matthew 21:6**

*The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup> Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” <sup>10</sup> And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” <sup>11</sup> And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”*

**1 Peter 2:4-9**

*As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— <sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For in Scripture it says:*

*“See, I lay a stone in Zion,  
a chosen and precious cornerstone,  
and the one who trusts in him  
will never be put to shame.”*



*<sup>7</sup> Now to you who believe this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,*

*“The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”*

*<sup>8</sup> and,*

*“A stone that causes people to stumble  
and a rock that makes them fall.”*

*They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.*

*<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

Peter quotes Isaiah 28:16 and applies the Messianic stone reference to Jesus.

- The imagery is vivid that Peter references from Isaiah.
- God placed Jesus as the chosen and valuable cornerstone.
- The cornerstone was every thing when building a structure in those days.
- The cornerstone needed to be straight and square so that the rest of the builder would be built straight.
- A building that leans will not endure.

**look at the descriptions of the text:**

- Living stones (5)
- Built up as a spiritual house (5)
- To be a holy priesthood (5)
- To offer spiritual sacrifices (5)
- So this honor is for you who believe (7)
- You are a chosen race (9)
- You are a royal priesthood (9)
- You are a holy nation (9)
- You are a people for his own possession (9)
- That you may proclaim the excellencies of him (9)
- Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people (10)



This is the idea that Peter is giving to us through Isaiah. Jesus is the perfect cornerstone upon which the spiritual house of God is built.

- We are the spiritual stones in this house.
- But we cannot be built just anywhere on this structure.
- We must be measured against the living stone to ensure that we are in line with it.
- As we are built upon this cornerstone, we must keep our lives aligned to Jesus.
- He is the foundation and we are to build our lives directly on him.
- Consider that Jesus is never out of alignment.
- He is the perfect, precious cornerstone chosen by God.

We are the ones who get out of alignment and must constantly measure ourselves against Jesus as our standard.

## I. The Living Stone

### The Living Stone, Rejected But Chosen

#### **Daniel 2:44-45**

*And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, 45 just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”*

**Jesus would go from King to Criminal, From Lord to Loser.**

Rejection. It hurts. No one likes it and we'll do what we can to avoid it.

And yet, if you are a follower of Jesus – an exile – it's to be expected.



As we long to be everything God declares we can be in Christ Jesus, rejection will come.

- So why would we willingly suffer and face rejection?
- Because we know that Jesus is worth it.
- We've tasted the spiritual milk.
- We know who we once were and who we are now in Christ.

Let's take a step back; why is it guaranteed that we'll face rejection? Because Jesus did first.

How do we react to rejection?

## A: Retaliation

Some people are driven to prove to somebody that they do have what it takes.

- They're going to spend the rest of their life trying to show that I am it, that I can do it.
- Retaliation. Sometimes this can be extremely violent, and a lot of the evil and terrorism that we see in our world today is the result of a root of rejection in somebody's heart that wasn't dealt with properly.
- A lot of what we see sometimes as aggression is really nothing more than the manifestation of a rejection that was not dealt with.
- Because someone never finds their place, they spend their whole life retaliating.

## B: Retreat

Far more often, people retreat when rejected.

- I just won't ask again.
- I just won't try again.
- I just won't move again.
- I just won't speak again,
- I always sound stupid when I do.
- I'm not going to put myself out there anymore.



They didn't appreciate me the last time. So, I retreat. I go hide in my cave. I go hide in my feelings. I go hide within my ego. I go hide within a false construct of myself.

## C: Redeem Rejection

There is a third way that the Scripture gives us, and that is to redeem rejection, the stone the builders rejected became the chief cornerstone.

That possibly, the greatest rejection in your life could become the building block for the greatest things that He wants to accomplish through you.

(if you treat it the right way, and if you process it the right way, and if you bring it to God as an offering and learn what to do with it,)

I want you to realize that when we celebrate what Christ did for us, and the cross that He died on for us,

- our blessing was only made possible because of His rejection.
- The grace that you stand in and that I stand in today because of Christ was only made possible because He embraced rejection.

Tim Keller illustrates it this way:

If after a service some Sunday morning one of the members of my church comes to me and says, "I never want to see you or talk to you again," I will feel pretty bad. But if today my wife comes up to me and says, "I never want to see you or talk to you again," that's a lot worse. The longer the love, the deeper the love, the greater the torment of its loss.

But this forsakenness, this loss, was between the Father and the Son, who had loved each other from all eternity. ... Jesus, the Maker of the world, was being unmade. Why? Jesus was experiencing Judgment Day. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" It wasn't a rhetorical question. And the answer is: For you, for me, for us. Jesus was forsaken by God so that we would never have to be. The judgment that should have fallen on us fell instead on Jesus.



Looking at verses 4 & 5, we see Jesus referred to as the Living Stone who was rejected by men, but chosen and precious by God.

The stone has this idea of God's rule and reign.

- Jesus, the son of God, was accused of being a fraud, a traitor, a criminal. He was crucified in the worst way imaginable.
- But the One who was rejected, was actually chosen and precious.
- His seemingly ultimate rejection was actually part of God's plan all along. His rejection was part of the plan to save you and me.

## II. Builder of a New Covenant

*<sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

That temple had been built under the covenant God made with his people at Mount Sinai, but there was a new covenant that had been made with the death of Jesus.

You'll remember what Jesus said in the upper room:

### **1 Corinthians 11:25**

*In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

Under this new covenant, a new temple or spiritual house was being built, one not made by hands but by the Lord himself.

- And the building material wasn't wood, stones, silver, or gold, but living stones—the lives of those who have placed their faith in Jesus.

Peter emphasizes that each of us is a stone – you are a stone.

- Each of us who have come to Jesus and accepted him becomes a stone for God's temple.
- While each of us individually is a stone, everything Peter is going to say he says of us corporately and not individually.



- Peter says that we are stones and together are we being built into the temple of God.

There are too many people who think they can go at it alone.

- They don't think they need the church.
- But that's not what the Bible teaches.
- God's word teaches that we need each other.

If you want to know what God is doing in the world today, you need to look at the church. Jesus is building his church as people are being saved.

In the Old Testament God established the Levites to be priests for the nation of Israel.

- As priests they represented God to the people and the people to God.
- They went between the people to God.
- However, the entire nation was to be as priests to the nations around them.

The Israelites were to represent God to the world and go to God on behalf of the world.

In the New Testament, that role shifts to the church. We are a holy priesthood and as we'll see in verse 9, a royal priesthood.

### III. A Chosen People

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

Let us shift our focus to our sermon's third and final point: the call to surrender and worship.

In Mark 11:8-10, we witness the crowd's heartfelt declaration of "Hosanna!" as Jesus entered Jerusalem.

- This cry, derived from Hebrew, means "Save now!" or "Save, we pray!"



- It was a plea for deliverance, an expression of their deep longing for liberation from the burdens of Roman oppression.

Peter uses four phrases to describe our citizenship:

- a chosen people,
- a royal priesthood,
- a holy nation,
- and God's special possession.

**A chosen people can also be translated as a chosen race.** We are a chosen race.

To be an Israelite you had to be a descendant of Abraham.

But now, to be a part of the church, you don't have to be from any particular race..

**Second, we are a royal priesthood.**

Verse 5 says we are a holy priesthood and now we're called a royal priesthood. That's because we serve Christ the King.

**Third, we're a holy nation.**

- That means that we are a people set apart and dedicated to God and his service.
- That's not talking just about morality, though God expects that of us too, but it refers to the fact that we have been set apart for God's glory.

**Fourth, we are God's special possession.**

The KJV gives an interesting translation when it says that we are a peculiar people. I've certainly known some peculiar Christians but I don't think that's what Peter was saying.

The 1828 copy of the Webster's Dictionary gives this definition:





***Exclusive property, that which belongs to a person in exclusion of others***

And that's what the Greek means as well. It refers to someone's personal property.

**Peter is saying that the church belongs exclusively to God and Jesus IS OUR KING!**

- We belong exclusively to God.
- Before coming to Jesus we belonged to the devil, but now we belong to God.
- We were bought with a price which was the precious blood of Christ. Therefore, we belong to God.

So we are:

1. Chosen people
2. Royal priesthood
3. Holy nation
4. God's special possession

All of this comes with responsibilities.

**Peter says God has made us like this so that we might declare his praises.**

- We are to tell others about how great God is.
- We're to tell them what he's done for us and will do for and that he will do it for them if that will only place their faith in Jesus.
- We're to tell others about God's love, his grace, and his mercy.

Peter then ends with this:

**1 Peter 2:10**

*Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

Peter is wrapping up everything he's said about the church in the opposites.

- Once you were not a people but now you are
- Once you had not receive mercy but now you have



## Conclusion:

I also don't want us to miss something special. Mount Moriah, the place Abraham nearly offers his son, is the place where the temple would be built. Mount Moriah is Jerusalem, the mountain Jesus rode up to on his triumphant entry. So just like when Abraham's donkey carried the wood for the sacrifice to the future home of Jerusalem, the donkey at the triumphant entry is carrying another sacrifice, this time the true and final sacrifice, to the same exact city, with calvary just outside its walls. God provides a ram to save Isaac, and he provides the lamb of God to save us.

Every person has this decision to make: what you do with Jesus.

- You can't be neutral when it comes to Jesus.
- He is either the savior of the world and you need saving.
- Or, He is not and you don't need saving.

Jesus is either your Living Stone, the cornerstone in which everything is built on top of. Or He's the stone that stubs your toe and trips you up.

### Optional Ending:

In 2004 Victor Yushchenko stood for the presidency of the Ukraine. Vehemently opposed by the ruling party Yushchenko's face was disfigured and he almost lost his life when he was mysteriously poisoned. This was not enough to deter him from standing for the presidency.

On the day of the election Yushchenko was comfortably in the lead. The ruling party, not to be denied, tampered with the results. The state-run television station reported "ladies and gentlemen, we announce that the challenger Victor Yushchenko has been decisively defeated."

In the lower right-hand corner of the screen a woman by the name of Natalia Dmitruk was providing a translation service for the deaf community. As the news presenter regurgitated the lies of the regime, Natalia Dmitruk refused to translate them. "I'm addressing all the deaf citizens of Ukraine" she signed. "They are lying and I'm ashamed to translate those lies. Yushchenko is our president."



The deaf community sprang into gear. They text messaged their friends about the fraudulent result and as news spread of Dmitruk's act of defiance increasing numbers of journalists were inspired to likewise tell the truth. Over the coming weeks the "Orange Revolution" occurred as a million people wearing orange made their way to the capital city of Kiev demanding a new election. The government was forced to meet their demands, a new election was held and Victor Yushchenko became president.

Philip Yancey writes

"When I heard the story behind the orange revolution, the image of a small screen of truth in the corner of the big screen became for me an ideal picture of the church. You see we as a church do not control the big screen. (When we do, we usually mess it up.) Go to any magazine rack or turn on the television and you see a consistent message. What matters is how beautiful you are, how much money or power you have. Similarly, though the world includes many poor people, they rarely make the magazine covers or the news shows. Instead we focus on the superrich, names like Bill Gates or Oprah Winfrey.... Our society is hardly unique. Throughout history nations have always glorified winners, not losers. Then, like the sign language translator in the lower right-hand corner of the screen, along comes a person named Jesus who says in effect, *Don't believe the big screen – they're lying. It's the poor who are blessed, not the rich. Mourners are blessed too, as well as those who hunger and thirst, and the persecuted. Those who go through life thinking they're on top end up on the bottom. And those who go through life feeling they're on the bottom end up on the top. After all, what does it profit a person to gain the whole world and lose his soul?*"

