



Who We Are

1 Peter 2:1-10



In his letter to Christians in Asia Minor, Peter addresses them as “exiles” (resident aliens, foreigners, sojourners) (*1:1*). Their beliefs, values and lifestyle are different from others in the society in which they live. In a culture of honor and shame, they may be struggling with their place in society. So Peter wants them to understand “who they are.”

Our Longing

- ❑ Christians are supposed to be different. We are called to “be holy” (set apart for God) (*1:14-16*). We are called to “love one another deeply, from the heart” (*1:22*). To love one another deeply, we must get rid of particular attitudes and behaviors. Read 1 Peter 2:1-3.¹
- ❑ In verses 1-3, the main imperative (command) is in verse 2: “Like newborn babies, crave (long for) pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.” (*NIV*)
 1. What does this metaphor teach us? What is the “pure spiritual milk” we should be craving?²

📖 “...now that you have tasted that the Lord is good, [crave pure spiritual milk]” (*2:3, NIV*).³

Our Part in God's Building

- ❑ Peter tells his readers “who they are,” especially in relation to “the living Stone.” In verses 4-8, Peter quotes (or alludes to) three Old Testament passages that talk about “stones” (*Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14*).⁴ Read 1 Peter 2:4-8.
- 2. Who is “the living Stone” (*2:4*) and “precious cornerstone” (*2:6-7*)?⁵
- ❑ Jesus had identified himself as the “cornerstone” of Psalm 118 (*Matthew 21:42-44; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17-18*). Peter had earlier identified Jesus as the cornerstone (*Acts 4:11*).
- 3. How do human attitudes toward “the living Stone” compare with God’s attitude?⁶ (*2:4-7*)



¹ ‘malice’ (*kakian* – evil) – feeling of wanting to hurt or harm someone; ‘deceit’ (*dolon*) – act of deceiving by using trickery or lies; ‘hypocrisy’ (*hypokriseis*) – pretending to have certain purposes or motivations, while in reality having quite different ones; ‘envy’ (*phthonous*) – having bad feelings toward someone because they have some real or presumed advantage; ‘slander’ (*katalalias*) – speaking against, especially to unjustly harm a person’s reputation.

² Most commentators say the ‘spiritual milk’ is the word of God. Peter has just talked about the ‘living and enduring word of God’ (*1:23, 25*). Of course, the word of God is the revelation of God Himself, so Peter does not necessary limit the milk metaphor exclusively to the written word of God. Jobes thinks it refers to ‘God’s life-sustaining grace in Christ’ (Karen Jobes, *1 Peter* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005], 141). Schreiner, who understands *logikon* (‘spiritual’) to mean ‘rational,’ says spiritual growth is rational in the sense that it is informed and sustained by God’s word’ (Thomas Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* [Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2003], 100).

³ Verse 3 alludes to Psalm 34:8. In fact, Psalm 34 is reflected throughout Peter’s letter.

⁴ 1 Peter 2:4-10 is full of Old Testament images of ethnic Israel, the temple, the priesthood and sacrificial system. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, and these images point to spiritual realities realized in Christ.

⁵ The ‘living Stone/cornerstone’ is the Messiah (Christ) Jesus. He is the *living* Stone because of his resurrection.

⁶ He was ‘rejected’ by humans (*2:4, 7*) but ‘chosen by God’ and is ‘precious’ to Him (*2:4, 6*). The word translated ‘precious’ is *entimon*, which means highly valued, honored. While many reject him, some ‘trust in him’ (*2:6*).

- ❑ The “living Stone /cornerstone” is precious to God, and he should be precious to us! The cornerstone was an important part of a building’s foundation. Thus the metaphor represents the foundational importance of Jesus Christ in the building of “God’s house” (2:5).⁷ More clearly put, Jesus Christ is absolutely necessary in the building of “God’s house!”
- ❑ Different attitudes toward the stone (Jesus Christ) result in different outcomes.
 - 📖 “...the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. [So honor will come to you who believe].⁸ But to those who do not believe... [Christ is a] stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall” (2:6b-7a, 8a).
- ❑ Though worldly societies may attempt to shame believers, honor (*not* shame) will belong to believers when they stand before God. But those who reject Christ stumble and fall in the sight of God, resulting in shame. They miss God’s way – the way of salvation and life.⁹
- ❑ While Jesus Christ is *the* living Stone, believers 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” (2:5, *NIV*).¹⁰ The church, consisting of believers, is God’s new temple.
 4. What does it mean to offer “spiritual sacrifices” to God? How can we do it, practically?¹¹



Our Purpose as God's People

- ❑ Peter continues to tell his readers “who they are.” Read 1 Peter 2:9-10.
- ❑ Peter’s description of Christians resembles the description of ethnic Israel (*Exodus 19:5-6*).¹² Christians (both Jews and Gentiles) are the new people of God.¹³
 5. Based on verse 9, what is the purpose of God’s people?¹⁴ In what practical ways can we “declare the praises (*or* mighty acts) of him who [rescued us]”?

Reflection & Application

- Are you satisfied with who you are? What is the basis of your sense of value? To God – the Creator and King, Christ is “precious” (highly valued, honored). Do you need to trust in him?
- As a believer, are you regularly offering “spiritual sacrifices” to God and “declaring His praises?” Do you regularly “crave pure spiritual milk?” This week reflect on Psalm 34, ask God to increase your thirst, and offer yourself as a living sacrifice to God (*Romans 12:1*).

⁷ ‘Spiritual house’ in verse 5 may be understood as ‘God’s building or house’ (*1 Cor. 3:9, 16; Heb. 3:6*) or ‘God’s temple’ (*Eph. 2:19-21*). It’s not a physical building, but refers to the church, consisting of believers, where God dwells by His Spirit and where Christ is the ‘foundation’ or ‘chief cornerstone’ (*1 Cor. 3:11, 16; Eph. 2:20*).

⁸ The NIV translates verse 7a, ‘Now to you who believe, this stone is precious.’ But most commentators believe it is better translated, ‘So the honor (*hē timē*) is for you who believe...’ (ESV, though the HCSB is quoted above). This translation is more consistent with the previous verse: ‘the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame’ (2:6b).

⁹ After Peter identified Jesus as the rejected stone/cornerstone of Psalm 118, he said, ‘Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved’ (*Acts 4:12, NIV*).

¹⁰ Paul writes, ‘In [Christ] the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit’ (*Ephesians 2:21-22*).

¹¹ In the New Testament, God’s people no longer offer animal sacrifices but we offer ‘spiritual sacrifices’ – through Christ and according to the Spirit. Consider 1 Peter 2:9; Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15-16; Philippians 4:16-18.

¹² Besides the obvious connection to Exodus 19:5-6, Isaiah 43:20-21 and Hosea 2:23 are also reflected in vv. 9-10.

¹³ For more information see ‘The New People of God’ in Jay’s Bible study series ‘God’s Promise for the Nations.’

¹⁴ Christians are a ‘royal priesthood’ – set apart to serve God in the interests of His kingdom, and to mediate God’s blessings to the nations. They are ‘God special possession’ and a ‘holy nation’ – set apart to know God and reflect His holiness. They are to ‘declare the praises (*or* mighty acts) of him who called [them] out of darkness into his wonderful light.’ In general, they are to know God and make Him known, that He may be glorified in all the earth.