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for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.*

9But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10for 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.

Funny how much we have become accustomed to the internet. I grew up old school and Pam can tell you that in days gone by when I would study in order to teach the bible, I would have a legal pad and a pile of books that used up the whole table.

But over time I have worked out a workflow that encompasses the same books and the same method, but now I just go from place to place on line and get all the same information to collate through, and instead of writing the notes out longhand, I type as I go.

The workflow is basically the same, but it's all digital. If I need a quote from Isaiah 28, I go there in biblehub.com and copy it, then paste it into my document I'm working on.

Not so today. The rumor is that a fiber was damaged in the fire up near Sparks and that's why we are down. Kind of hard to believe that we have to rely on a single fiber, it isn't a loop that can backfeed from somewhere else. I'm not sure I'm buying that. But here we are.

Last week we looked at this metaphor Peter is using of the Stone of Israel. Obscure to us, but not to the people of Israel. They were very familiar with the idea of the Stone of Israel. Jacob references the Stone as he blesses his 12 sons in their final blessing in Genesis 49:24 *24 But his bow remained firm, And his arms were agile, From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel*

The Mighty One of Jacob. The Shepherd, and the Stone of Israel are all messianic references that the jews will see again and again. The Mighty One in battle for His chosen people. A tender shepherd that cares for their needs and their safety. He leads them and guards them against harm. And Stone, which is immovable foundation.

Daniel speaks of the Stone cut out without hands that crushes all of the earthly Kingdoms of men to dust. All the kingdoms of the world become dust in the wind, and are no more. But the Stone of Israel becomes a mountain that fills the whole earth.

As the jews would celebrate the passover, every year, one of the things that every household would do together is to recite Psalms 115 through 118. At the height of the celebration as they finish together they would say these familiar words from memory, together;

*The Stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.
This is the Lord's doing;
It is marvelous in our eyes.
This is the day which the Lord has made;*

*Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
O Lord, do save, we beseech Thee;
O Lord, we beseech Thee, do send prosperity.
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*

Jesus, rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, the foal of an ass and the people shouted Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

But the builders, the rulers of Israel, the pharisees and the high priests told the people to hush. They said it was blasphemy to say those words about this man Jesus. He was not the Mighty One. He was not the Shepherd of Israel. He was not the Stone they were looking for.

They rejected Him, and despite the incredibly poor timing of doing it at passover, they had Him crucified. And as Jesus was dying on the cross, the people were in their houses saying *The Stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.*

The Stone of Israel. The Mighty One. The Shepherd of Israel. Rejected by Israel, He hung dying and as the people recited the very words the fulfillment of the prophecy was happening outside the wall.

What was the chance that all of those sayings would align and happen just as the Psalmist had said. 2000 years later we look back on those events and say; *This is the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.*

Only God could have arranged that scene, so aptly described in the Psalms, centuries earlier.

And as the early church begins it's first baby steps forward, this is the text that is close to everyone's lips. This amazing Psalm. These words get referenced over and over as the church moves out and explains to unbelieving Israel, you carried out these words. You killed your Shepherd, the Stone of Israel. But God raised Him up again.

This became a main talking point to the early church in Jerusalem. The familiar story. The words from the Hillel. Recited every year. It

happened in your sight. God did this. He arranged pre-written history and caused it to happen. And He resurrected Jesus, His Son, from the grave.

That was a powerful powerful word to Israel. Paul didn't go there at the areopagus in Athens. It would be unfamiliar, unmeaningful to greeks. But to jews; familiar and powerful.

That's why we're taking some extra time in this passage. When you understand all that's involved in the metaphor of the Stone of Israel, it's powerful.

The Stone of Israel, cut out without hands, crushes all the kingdoms of this world to dust, but to us, He is the living stone, and we become stones in Him that God is building into a spiritual house, a temple, and like the mountain in Daniel, it encompasses the whole earth.

Therefore, in one obscure to us matephor, God encompasses His plan from eternity past to eternity future. The Stone of Israel, cut out without hands, crushes Satan's rebellion and reduces it to dust that vanishes and is remembered no more. Then it fills the earth, a household of God filled with worship. Satan deposed. Evil vanquished and removed. The Stone of Israel accomplishes this.

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. For Thine IS the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen. All of that encompassed in the Stone of Israel.

And so Peter launches into facets of this marvelous metaphor of a stone. And he's going to rotate that diamond and the light will glance off of it's many facets in all directions.

In vss. 2 and 3 Peter tells us to crave the milk of the word. Here, he will give us an example of mining the depths of the word. An object lesson that is an example to us of how to dig in and look at all of the riches within this book.

Last week we didn't make it through all of vs. 5, so we want to dive back in and begin our consideration of Peter's words there.

4And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5you 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.

We got to the spiritual house, and we reminded ourselves of those marvelous truths again this morning in our introduction, and now we want to look at this idea of a priesthood.

5you 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.

Just here I would interject something that doesn't occur to us. Peter is speaking to christians who are aliens in this world. They're aliens because the world has rejected them for their belief in one Jesus of Nazareth.

When they did that, when they believed, there was cost involved. If you are a jew, and I believe many of these folks Peter is speaking to indeed were, your family dis-families you, you are dead to them, the synagogue unsynagogue's you, you have no entrance into jewish life.

You have no temple and you have no priesthood. Peter comes along and tells these alien, cast out folks; YOU are the temple. YOU are the priesthood.

Is there any basis in scripture for what Peter tells them? There is, and it is marvelous, and it ties us right back into the Stone of Israel. Look with me at Matthew 21, in the temple grounds, as the builders are questioning Jesus even though their hearts have already rejected the Stone.

Jesus tells a parable to the builders who are in the midst of rejecting the Stone. Vss. 33 - 46

Listen to another parable; ***there was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and put a winepress in it and built a tower*** (He quotes from Isaiah 5 to put them in the picture they are familiar with)

*and rented it out to vinegrowers and went on a journey. 34 And when the harvest time approached, he sent His slaves to the vinegrowers to receive his produce. 35 And the vinegrowers took his slaves and beat one and killed another and stoned a third. 36 Again, he sent another group of slaves, larger than the first, and they did the same thing to them. 37 But afterward, he sent his son to them saying; "They will respect my son." 38 But when the vinegrowers saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance. 39 And they took him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him! 40 Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinegrowers? 41 And they said to him; "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons." 42 Jesus said to them; "Did you never read in the scriptures, ***The Stone which the builders rejected, this became the Chief Cornerstone; This came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes?***" 43 Therefore, I say to you; ***The Kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it.****

Hold your finger in Matthew 21 because we're going to come back to it in a moment.

Jesus says; The authority to reign of God, the kingdom of God as represented in a chosen nation, will be removed from that nation and given to someone else. Because why? the nation of Israel rejected the stone of Israel.

And Peter tells these scattered beat down aliens, YOU are that nation. It isn't Israel any more. YOU are the temple where God dwells, it isn't in Jerusalem any more. YOU are the holy Priesthood of God. It isn't the priests doing service in the temple in Jerusalem any more.

They may have been homesick for all of those things, but Peter tells them, that house is left desolate, and in fact you are the replacement, and more than the replacement. This prophecy of Jesus has come true already as of the writing of Peter to these saints of God scattered about.

The stone thing is obscure to us, but even more so is this idea of priesthood.

Typically we read this and we think, yay, I'm part of a holy priesthood, whatever that is. And we don't have a clue. Again, we need to go to the scriptures, the old testament and try to understand what this might have meant to the original hearers.

The priesthood was designed by God to make it possible for broken sinful filthy men to approach a Holy Pure Perfect God.

God outlined how that access would work. And it is incredibly difficult. Access to God was incredibly laborious and happened one time a year after weeks of cleansings and rituals and offerings, the single high priest of Israel would enter into the Holy of Holies and approach God with a sin offering for the people.

You can go and read of Aaron, Moses brother, who God chose. Him and his sons would be the priests for Israel. He had four sons and they went through all of the preparations, sacrifices and blood all over the place, and two of Aaron's sons did it wrong. They offered strange fire to God in their fire pans, and God burned them up. Toast. Now there's Aaron and 2 sons, not 4.

Approaching God was difficult and tedious and had to be done exactly as He commanded it to be done. Deadly serious business. Don't bring your self styled strange fire to God. He smote those priests who did that.

We've lost that sense of dread. The awe of approaching a Holy God. When the high priest would finally enter the holy of holies, he had bells that would sound as he moved. There was a rope tied to him so they could pull him out of there without entering themselves if perhaps God

should strike him dead and the bells would cease to tinkle.

That was on that side of the cross. Access to God was dreadful, frightening, awesome, terrifying, difficult. Nobody else had any access. Only the high priest. Made holy by all of the sacrifices and rituals that God had outlined as images of the great High Priest who would come. Once a year only.

On this side of the cross, with that in mind, how marvelous are the words that Peter has just said.

The Stone of Israel. We are also stones in Him. Being built into a spiritual house. A temple where we are all partakers in a holy priesthood.

Unlike the old high priest, our access has been purchased for us and paid for by the blood of the Son of God. We are made holy with a righteousness not our own. Jesus imputes His perfect righteousness unto us. In Him, we are holy, and thus we have full access to God.

5you 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

OK, we have access to a Holy God. We are a priesthood. We have access. What does it mean to us. How do we offer up spiritual sacrifices. What is that. What does that mean?

Let me take you to a passage in Romans that will get you on track. This will begin to fall into place. A very familiar passage that sounds the same as Peter but is more descriptive. Romans 12:1,2

I beseech ye therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice acceptable unto God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Acceptable spiritual sacrifice is the giving of every facet of your being to God, in worship. Studying the word is acceptable worship. Serving the Lord by doing works of service to this body of believers that belong to Him is acceptable service.

Any time you submit yourselves to the Holy Spirit for Him to live through you, whether it be in song, or meditation, or study, or witnessing, or teaching, or caring for the infirm, whatever you do for the glory of God that His Spirit combines with you and accomplishes; that is acceptable spiritual sacrifice.

The Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. Jesus told her God is seeking worshippers. Acceptable worship. God is building a spiritual house, a temple if you will, of stones who have come to Jesus and submitted to His Lordship. Those are just 2 examples. This truth is everywhere in this book.

In Revelation chapter 8, before God unleashes judgement in the seven final trumpets, before that commences, look at what is said first that preceded the judgement.

Vss. 1 - 4 And when He broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2. And I saw seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. 3. And another angel came and stood at the altar holding a golden censer, and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints went up before God out of the angels hands.

I would submit to you that the prayers of the saints, and perhaps particularly the prayers of the saints who are calling out for God to come and defend His own and judge those who hate them and Him, are a sweet aroma to God. . . . *spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

Now then, Peter is going to contrast the two facets of the same stone.

Precious value to some; Judgement to others. To some the stone is access to the very presence of God Almighty. To others the stone will crush them in judgement. The contrast, drawn from scripture by Peter, is brilliant.

Notice that what you don't have here is middle ground. Either Jesus is more precious to you than anything else, or like the builders, you reject Him.

In politics we have this magical category called "undecided". There is no such category when it comes to access to God through His Son's holy blood. Access to worship, or judgement are the only two possibilities Peter is going to expose from the scriptures.

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8and,

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for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.*

Let's consider each verse separately just briefly. MacArthur spent 6 weeks in here. Sadly, I do not have that depth. However it's available and it's free for anyone that would like to dig deeper. (Except people in Tonopah who have no internet service.)

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AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”

Peter is quoting Isaiah 28:16. We aren't as familiar with cornerstones as was once the case. This building has a cornerstone that is engraved.

At one time it was a time of celebration. A cornerstone marked the beginning of a building project. That first stone at the corner was a landmark in the project. All the other stones emanated from that one. It was the beginning of the foundation.

And a cornerstone had to have perfect angles, or the whole building would be thrown off in all directions. If the cornerstone is off by hundredths of a degree, it will show up in just a very few feet.

Out where I work we've used the same cartesian coordinate system for 60 years. Worked fine until recently. Now our triangulations aren't coming out right any more? Why? Because over time our pointing angles have become so crisp with new technology that we're seeing lines not line up right.

Things that should connect aren't connecting. And it's because the original cartesian system we used 60 years ago didn't compensate for the curvature of the earth. 60 years ago a flat earth was good enough for triangulation. Now the stuff is exact enough that those tiny angles of slop are showing up.

In Revelation 21, the city of God is measured and it's 1500 miles square. So, what is the angle of the cornerstone so that all of those angles 1500 miles square all align perfectly? It makes your brain hurt. Unless you're God. He has a really expensive cornerstone with perfect angles.

There is only one corner stone in the building that God is putting together. *“BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone,*

It is a choice stone. Perfect in every way. And it has precious value. More value than anything this world has to offer or compare.

My mind wanders to Matthew 4 where Satan tempts the Stone. Each temptation has something to do with a stone. Foolish business on Satan's part.

Turn this stone into bread. Jesus is the Stone, and He is the bread of life.

Jump off the temple heights and the angels will lift you up lest you dash your foot against a stone. Jesus is the Stone that others will stumble over. He never stumbles.

Bow down and worship me and I'll give you all these kingdoms. Jesus is the Stone that will crush all of the kingdoms Satan was offering Him.

“BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”

Does Satan ever sneak those little thoughts into your poor weak brain. What if you're wrong. What if this is all hocus pocus pie in the sky and the people living hedonistic me me me lives are actually getting the most of what can be gotten.

Ever have those little sneakers. Well, if you would like to do combat like Jesus did, in the temptation, by using scripture to silence Satan; this is your verse. Listen to it again. ***AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.***”

How many times would you like me to say it? ***AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.***” ***AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.***” Is that not a lovely phrase?

7This precious value, then, is for you who believe;

The Stone of Israel. The precious Cornerstone. The Stone who died and lives again to give you access to a Holy God. ***7This precious value,***

then, is for you who believe;

I've been reading Foxe's Book of Martyrs. It's a slow read. You don't sit and devour it in a single weekend like you might do with a really good novel. It's going slow.

Part of the reason for that is this. It's the same story over and over and over and over. Different people, different places, different centuries, different horrific acts, but the same story.

Choose. What has more value to you? Your life. Your family's life. Your beloved wife's life and dignity? Your kids lives. Horrific choices.

Or Christ. Abandon Him, keep the rest. Same deal every time. And century after century, over and over it's always the same answer. There is nothing more precious to real believers, than having Jesus. So they line up like sheep to be slaughtered.

Access to God. Sins forgiven. A righteousness not my own. Eternal life. A stone in God's building. *7This precious value, then, is for you who believe;*

but . . . and oh what a terrifying conjunction this little word is; *but for those who disbelieve,*

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for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.*

If, like the builders of Israel, the chief priests and scribes and pharisees, if like them you reject God's chosen corner stone, there's only one possibility for you. The Stone will crush you. The Stone will be a rock of offense.

We live in a mining town. Ever take a look at the little stamp mill on

display at Marsh's Banc Club? There's a cam that lifts up heavy stones and when the cam clears, the stones fall on the ore beneath and crush it to powder.

If, like the builders of Israel, you reject God's choice cornerstone, then the stone becomes a rock of offense. The stone will grind you to powder. It's an either - or proposition. There's no middle ground.

There's an obscure prophecy in Luke's gospel recorded for us. When Joseph and Mary took the tiny baby Jesus to the temple for presentation, an old man named Simeon gave a prophecy about the baby; Luke 2 and I'll just read the end of his prophecy;

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed - 35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul - to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Jesus is a Stone who makes a divide in Israel. Many will rise. Many will fall. No middle ground.

Now, then, we'll go back to Matthew 21 and Jesus will finish His prophecy about Himself, the Stone of Israel, to the builders He is speaking to,

Recall in vs. 43 He has told them that the Kingdom will be taken away from them, the builders of Israel, and given to another who bears it's fruit. But what happens to the ones who reject the Stone of Israel? Vs. 44

And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust. (remember Daniel 2? dust) 45 And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. 46 And when they sought to seize Him, they become afraid of the multitudes, because they held Him to be a prophet.

The builders would have dragged Him off and stoned him that very

moment if they could have. But the multitude would not allow it. And it was not God's perfect timing.

The Stone of Isreal divides. It either makes you a stone in God's spiritual house, a sweet aroma of sacrifices acceptable and pleasing to Him, or it falls on you and grinds you to dust and scatters you apart from God for eternity.

A couple of interesting words in Peter's commentary on Isaiah 8:14 which he quotes.

for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, The gospel is ubiquitous in our nation. No one can claim they didn't have opportunity to hear.

Out where I work there's a day room with lounge chairs and a giant screen TV set for the guys who stay over. Drink beer and watch something filthy on TV before you sleep.

And near the door, on one of the chairs that never gets used, on the arm is a gold colored New King James Version of the Bible placed years ago by the Gideons. It's laid on the same chair for at least 2 years now.

That's a conscious choice. Drink beer and watch something filthy, or read from God's book. Hmm. I'm waiting to see if it moves. When it goes missing, I'll check the trash cans. Peter says; *for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word,*

Willfully ignoring the ubiquitously free and available Word of God is being disobedient to the word. They know what I believe. I'm available. Hey, even if you just wanted to pick a fight about it and try to make me look stupid, I'm available. But the conscious choice is to let that sleeping dog lie.

And then Peter says something interesting. *and to this doom they were also appointed.*

Does that mean that God has a doom book and he wrote their name in it.

Appointed to doom? I don't think so. I believe doom is a choice. But it sort of works like gravity.

You could say that God designed within gravity an appointed doom. If I step off the edge of the grand canyon, there is an appointed doom for me. It's built in.

God has appointed necessary judgement for any who reject the Stone of Israel. It's just built in like gravity. It's chosen by those who reject God's provision. Just like walking off the edge. Totally unnecessary. But it's where the wide road leads to.

Meanwhile, the Spirit and the bride say Come. Come into the narrow way and taste the goodness of access to a Holy God who loves you.

Read Rev. 21:9 - 23