

As having tasted that the Lord is gracious we are to, as newborns, seek the nourishment and growth available from the word of God. The same word by which we were brought forth. But there is more. Much more! Just as a baby needs to grow strong and begin to master an immense number of skills we believers do too. Peter continues describing the blessings we have been brought into by our new birth. With these privileges come responsibilities to carry out. But our spiritual growth will enable us to handle these.

We come to the One whom we have tasted is good and find He is stable and solid as a rock! One we certainly can safely rest upon. **He** is the **Living Stone**. Jesus is the Christ, chosen by God, but disallowed by men. They crucified Him. Yes He is the Chosen, the ELECT One, the Anointed, the Christ! (This word "elect" is the same as spoken of us in chapter 1:2.) And He is **PRECIOUS!** (valued, dear to God's heart and ours, most honorable.) And then Peter reveal that **we** are also living stones. And we are built up into a **spiritual** house. A real Temple, the House of God, on earth. A temple made up of saved people, not stone. A temple supplanting the massive, ornate temple in Jerusalem. That one was built by King Herod for the Jews, but was soon to be totally destroyed by the Romans (accomplished in AD 70). How gracious of God to these Jews who have trusted in Jesus as their Christ. He **replaces** the beautiful, but dead, stone temple they had forsaken with a far superior, living and permanent one. One with Jesus Christ as chief cornerstone. Paul refers to this temple this building as well. See 1Corinthians 3, 2Corinthians 6, Ephesians 2 and 1Timothy 3. See also number 99 in Hymns for the Little Flock.

In Jerusalem there was a priesthood founded by God under Moses to minister in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and later established by David for the temple to be built by Solomon in Jerusalem. That priesthood, having become corrupt, crucified the Christ, and was also due for destruction with the temple. But we find God graciously **replacing** it with a holy priesthood. Who is this holy priesthood?. It is the believers, the living stones composing the new temple. It is those Peter was writing to (and us). They/we are **all** priests not just some elite hierarchy of Levites, originally set up under Moses. The line between the people and the priesthood has been obliterated, taken away. But the status of God's priesthood was not lowered or made common. Rather the common people who accepted Christ as Savior are lifted into a new and superior priesthood. **A holy priesthood**. A priesthood in which every priest could continually and freely approach God.

Priests offer sacrifices. That's what they do. But our sacrifices are now **spiritual** sacrifices, sacrifices acceptable to God. Those Old Testament animal sacrifices had become an affront to God, because they

represented mere empty religious ritual from a people who did not truly love God, much less honor and obey Him. Their sacrifices had ceased having any spiritual meaning, and would soon be terminated. See the Prophets, particularly Malachi, for what God thought of the old priesthood and their sacrifices. Our **spiritual sacrifices** are acceptable to God! How? By Jesus Christ. He makes them acceptable, because He, as Great High Priest, has presented himself an offering acceptable to God. (Hebrews speaks more to this.) Christ is now there at God's right hand interceding for us, and adding His incense to our **prayers**,

Revelation 8:3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

and **praise** and **thanksgiving**.

Hebrews 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. 16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

See also number 114 in Hymns for the Little Flock.

Other spiritual sacrifices are **our bodies**,

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

our service for the Lord,

Philippians 2:17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. {offered: Gr. poured forth}

and **our support of others**.

Philippians 4:18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

Peter regularly brings up Old Testament scriptures familiar to these Jews scattered abroad, and shows how God is now fulfilling them spiritually. He points out that the Lord is the Cornerstone of a building. This had been prophesied by Isaiah.

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

But He is the stone which the builders (Israel, and in particular, the Jews in Palestine in Christ's day) first rejected. This had been prophesied by David, Psalm 118:22. Jesus himself cited this passage to those rejecting him.

Matthew 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

And He became a stumbling stone and a rock of offence to the nation of Israel then and still is, as prophesied in Isaiah

8:14. Paul refers to the fact this was their appointed fate, Romans 9:22. Much of the New Testament uses Old Testament scriptures to establish that things were being changed, but they were changing strictly as forecast.

Priests maintain communications and relationships between God and man. That is their primary function. These are two way communications, man to God and God to man. There are two orders of priests mentioned by Peter. A Holy Priesthood and a Royal Priesthood. Each believer is both.

To approach God the priest must be of the **holy** order of priests. They are authorized by God and free to approach Him with worship, thanksgivings, prayers, supplications etc. These may be personal, with others, or as spokesman of a congregation he is part of. One doing so should cleanse himself daily so he or she is personally **holy**.

Priests who bring God's word to man are of the **royal** order of priests. They show forth the praises of the Lord who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. They speak as the oracles of God, 1Peter 4:10-11, bringing to bear the inspired word of God from which they speak. In the Spirit, they bring the gospel to an unbeliever or an exhortation, a word of comfort or word of encouragement to a believer. As a priest, he or she may speak privately to another person. They use any gift the Lord has given especially suiting them him for His purpose. As a priest a man may speak publically as God's spokesman to a gathering of persons, such as a gospel meeting or a teaching meeting. He uses any gift the Lord has given him especially suiting him for this purpose. They may also speak as moved by the Holy Spirit as part of a meeting of a local assembly gathered unto the name of the Lord. Another example of a priestly function is that of the "angel," or messengers, of local assemblies addressed in the first three chapters of Revelation. Compare Malachi 2.

Malachi 2:7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts..

God established the Aaronic priesthood in the wilderness. All descendants of Aaron were priests by birth. They had no choice, and others could not become priests. Today also, all believers are priests by new birth. Each is a member, and is to function in both roles of the priesthood. Peter announces this and encourages us to take our privileges and responsibilities seriously and diligently. He

contrasts the blessings now with those Jehovah offered

the children of Israel at Sinai 1400 some years before. He even cites features of the present spiritual blessing that correspond amazingly to that offer which Israel forfeited by choosing the law instead of Jehovah's simple offer to honor the promise given by grace to Abraham years before.

*Exodus 19:4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. 5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a **peculiar treasure** unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me **a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation**. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

Now Peter reminds them that **they** are now the people of God, not national Israel. Israel has been set aside for the time being, see Hosea 1:9-10; 2:23; and Romans 9:25.. While Peter writes to scattered believers of Jewish descent, all believers are included in this blessing. Neither Jews or Gentiles deserved God's mercy although Israel enjoyed God's special favor for 2000 years. God called Israel His chosen people. In unilaterally choosing them, and blessing them, God desired to be glorified in them before the Gentiles. They were intended to demonstrate the grace and mercy of the Almighty and serve as channels of blessing to the Gentiles. They didn't fulfill His hopes for them. In fact they never laid hold upon the blessings themselves, later becoming "not a people." God, in His infinite grace, will restore Israel nationally to prominence, and even preeminence above the nations, with Jesus as their King forever. (Peter has mentioned that hope already.) But not now. Now we, all believers, are His people, a people for a possession, His treasure, the People of God, showing forth His praises. We are a holy nation. No, not America. The United States, however greatly blessed by God, is not His chosen nation. Nor is the holy nation any one sect of believers. And it is not the godly remnants God has separated out within the ruination called Christendom, though they all are part of that holy nation. God's holy nation is the "ye" Peter speaks to. The "elect" addressed in this epistle chapter 1:2. Yes, it is made up of all true believers on earth. The Kingdom of God! Not ruling here until Jesus reigns. But He reigns in our hearts now. Bow and worship, and obey. After all we are part of the holy priesthood. Tell the story. After all we are part of the royal priesthood. His treasured possession. **His!**

By Ron Canner, December 1, 2004.

On Christ salvation rests secure;

The Rock of Ages must endure;
Nor can that faith be overthrown
Which rests upon the "Living Stone."

No other hope shall intervene:
To Him we look, on Him we lean:
Other foundations we disown,
And build on Christ, the "Living Stone."

In Him, it is ordained to raise
A temple to Jehovah's praise,
Composed of all the saints, who own
No Savior but the "Living Stone."

View the vast building, see it rise;
The work how great! the plan how wise!
O wondrous fabric! power unknown!
That rears it on the "Living Stone."

But most adore His precious name;
His glory and His grace proclaim;
For us, condemned, despised, undone,
He gave Himself, the "Living Stone."

Author unknown.
99 Hymns for the Little Flock

The holiest we enter

In perfect peace with God,
Through whom we found our center,
In Jesus and His blood:
Though great may be our dullness
In thought, and word, and deed,
We glory in the fulness
Of Him that meets our need.

Much incense is ascending
Before th' eternal throne;
God graciously is bending
To hear each feeble groan;
To all our prayers and praises
Christ adds His sweet perfume,
And love the censer raises,
These odors to consume.

O God, we come with singing,
Because Thy great High Priest
Our names to Thee is bringing,
Nor e'er forgets the least;
For us He wears the miter,
Where "holiness" shines bright,
For us His robes are whiter
Than heaven's unsullied light.

Author unknown
114 Hymns for the Little flock