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1 Peter 2:4-10

Sixth Message

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# NEW CONSTRUCTION

*SERIES: A PILGRIM'S LIFE IN AN ALIEN LAND*

The earthquake which struck our area on Tuesday last should have revealed to each of us at least two things: how sure are our foundations, and how well are we anchored to them.

A few years ago at an earthquake preparedness seminar, a number of geologists and engineers talked about the earthquake which would surely shake the Bay Area one of these days, and what homeowners could do to minimize damage to their homes. Some time later, when I put an addition on our home, I followed the advice I heard at the meeting and nailed 4×8 ft plywood siding both inside and outside the new construction. Then, when we moved into the renovated areas, I bolted most of our free-standing furniture to the studs in an effort to forestall the expected damage when the earthquake struck. I forgot to do this in my study, however, and on Tuesday afternoon when the quake finally came, seven book cases (which I had neglected to tie to the wall studs), holding more than 600 books, came crashing down. I learned firsthand the lesson that no matter how good the foundations, if we are not anchored to them we are in trouble.

Later, as I thought about the damage done to the Santa Cruz, Los Gatos and San Francisco Marina districts, where the ground itself gave way, I wondered what could anyone do to escape the damage and destruction. I heard one person say on television, "If you can't trust the ground you walk on, what can you trust?" No matter how well people prepare for the "Big One," as it is called (that is yet to come), they are getting a sense that something bigger than them is at work out there, and that man is but dust.

New construction is our theme this morning as we continue our studies in 1 Peter. The apostle has already given us five commands in response to our glorious salvation in Jesus Christ. His fifth exhortation, which we looked at last week, was, "long for the pure milk of the word." Today, in verses 4-10, he tells us what happens to our soul when we feed on God's Word. When we do this, we learn the secret of a new building program which God is engaged in in this present age. An understanding of this secret holds the key to world history and answers the question of where we can find secure foundations.

This passage takes us to the heart of Old Testament theology. It explains how the Old Testament Scriptures testify not just to mere facts, but to a living Person, Jesus Christ himself, who is the very corner stone of God's new building project, the new temple which he is erecting in this age. Though this corner stone was rejected by men, God places infinite value on him. Those who embrace Jesus also have this honor bestowed upon them, so that they, too, are "being built up" as living stones, ministering priestly service in this heavenly kingdom. The value you place on this corner stone, therefore, determines your destiny, according to the apostle.

Our text has two parts:

- I. The New Temple: Summary (2:4-5)
  - A. Christ the Cornerstone (2:4)
  - B. We as the Living Stones (2:5)
- II. The New Temple: Details (2:6-10)
  - A. Christ the Cornerstone (2:6-8)
  - B. We as the Living Stones (2:9-10)

**And coming to Him as a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you 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. For this is contained in Scripture:**

**"Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone,  
And he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed."**

**This precious value, then, is for you who believe, but for those who disbelieve,**

**"The stone which the builders rejected,  
This became the very corner stone,"**

**and,**

**"A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense";**

**for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you have not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

## I. New Materials: Living Stones (2:4)

**And coming to Him as a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God,**

This new temple, says Peter, has four characteristics in this new age which Jesus has inaugurated. First, God is using new materials for this new construction. Builders are always looking for new kinds of materials, products which are more beautiful than formerly and which will stand up better.

Isaiah saw a day when God would use new materials in this temple. The prophet wrote (44-66) to the Babylonian exiles who had endured the destruction of the old temple. Even the rubble which remained was raked and turned over, and the Jews were taken captive to Babylon. But Isaiah had a vision to comfort the captives. One day, he foresaw, a new temple, built with new materials, would be erected. Here are the prophet's words to the people,

**O afflicted one, storm-tossed and not comforted,  
Behold, I will set your stones in antimony,  
and your foundation I will lay in sapphires.  
Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies,**

**And your gates of crystal,  
And your entire wall of precious stones. (Isa 54:11-12)**

The prophet uses jewels and precious stones to impress upon the Jews how valuable the new temple would be. Here, Peter picks up that concept and calls the materials “living stones.”

When Jesus, the Messianic King who revered God’s temple (“One greater than Solomon”) saw the money-changers at work in the temple of his day, he overturned their tables and drove them out of the temple. Later, when the authorities asked him by what right and by what authority he did this, Jesus replied (John 2:18-22), “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews therefore said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and You will raise it up in three days?” But He was speaking of the temple of *His body*. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.”

Jesus, the Messiah, did this as a symbolic act that this temple would be judged and overthrown. A new temple would be built, but this time living stones would replace the old order of bricks, mortar and human hands. This time, says Peter, you and I, living stones, will be the new construction, fitted together to form the new temple, like precious stones reflecting the glory of Jesus Christ.

There is great significance to this. First, no longer do we have to go to Jerusalem to find heaven on earth, for this is what the temple was—the place to worship God, where people lived in harmony in his presence. But Jesus said, “Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in their midst.” Now the Holy of Holies is present wherever Christians gather together any place on earth.

Second, this demonstrates what we ought to value in the church. We do not place value in buildings but in living stones. Earthquakes have a way of refocusing our priorities, don’t they? I have talked to many people since the earthquake on Tuesday but not one of them has spent any time mourning the loss of any of their possessions. On the contrary, all were thankful that they and their loved ones survived.

I can bear testimony to this myself. I have a little earthenware jar in my possession which I got in Israel. It dates from the time of David, 3,000 years ago. I placed that gem on the mantle in my livingroom, although at the time I felt it might be presumptuous to take such a precious thing, which has survived three millennia, to my California home. When the earthquake struck, any thought of saving the vase never even entered my head, however. I immediately ran past the livingroom and grabbed my three children and brought them to safety. Living stones, not material things, are what we value in the church.

Not only is this new and living temple built with new materials, it has new and better foundations than the old, according to Peter.

## II. New Foundations (2:6)

I would like to read Peter’s quotation, from Isaiah 28:16, from the original Hebrew so that we may hear the alliteration which the prophet used for emphasis:

**For this is contained in Scripture:**

**“Behold, I will *found* in Zion a stone,  
A tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the *foundation*, well  
*founded*,  
He who believes in Him will not be in haste.”**

Second Samuel 7 tells us that David’s son would be the temple builder: “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (7:12-13). Solomon built the first earthly temple, and Jesus, David’s greater son, would build the heavenly temple. What is amazing, though, is the prophet then declares that this Messianic King is also the temple and the corner stone of the temple!

The word used here of the Messiah is that he is a “*tested stone*.” This word is used in the Old Testament with God as the subject, when he is testing things to determine their essential qualities, especially integrity. God has put this stone to the test and found it to be true, righteous, and filled with integrity. That is why the throne of this One is unshakable. Because the throne is thus established, according to the psalmists, it is unshakable, and God’s loyal love would not forsake it forever. The implication here is that Jesus was a righteous King, a tested stone, therefore his throne has stability; it is immovable.

Because of this, Jesus became the precious corner stone of the foundation. God sees this stone as having infinite value. It is the chief stone by which the rest of the building is not only built upon, but measured and tied together. The very next verse in Isaiah reads, “I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the level.” The entire temple is built upon Jesus. He holds it together, and he is the standard by which everything else is measured. Friends, how you value this stone determines your destiny.

So Jesus is the tested stone, and the precious corner stone of the foundation.

Now, thirdly, because of these two realities, the text emphasizes that this new temple is permanent. Unlike the first two temples, which were destroyed by the Babylonians and the Romans, no enemy or natural disaster can destroy it. This sense of permanency is emphasized three times in the text. God would lay a foundation, a stone of foundation, a foundation stone well laid. Integrity is its own defense.

Psalm 89 says,

**I have made a covenant with My chosen;  
I have sworn to David My servant,  
I will establish your seed forever,  
And build up your throne to all generations. (3-4)**

**Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne;  
Loyal love and faithfulness go before Thee. (14)**

If you therefore have placed your life in Christ, and are anchored to that foundation, according to Isaiah, “he who trusts in Him will not be in haste.” This word “haste” speaks of that inner agitation which we have all been feeling for the past few days when we were tempted to believe that our security depended on ourselves. This is when our lives become hectic and feverish, as we run around trying to hold the disparate parts together. But if we have placed our life in Jesus, we will not be in haste when the judgment comes. My seven-year-old likes to sing the song, “Don’t Worry, Be Happy.” That’s our life in Christ.

On Wednesday mornings at 6:30 we have our men’s Bible study and prayer meeting here at church. Last Wednesday, less than 14 hours after the earthquake, I thought that no one would come, so I was feverishly acting in haste, straightening out my home. Later,

however, I found out that 20 men had come anyway, and they all went out to breakfast together. There they prayed, and anchored themselves to the Kingdom. They were not in haste.

This is what Isaiah goes on to say in chapter 54, verses 13-14:

**And all your sons will be taught of the LORD;  
And the well-being of your sons will be great.  
In righteousness you will be established;  
You will be far from oppression, for you will not fear;  
And from terror, for it will not come near you.**

So this new temple is not only built with new and better materials, it has deeper foundations that are immovable, because it is established in righteousness.

This temple has a third quality..

### III. Built Without Human Subsidy (2:7)

This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve,

**“The stone which the builders rejected,  
This became the very corner stone.”**

In contrast to the old, the new temple is built without human subsidy. Both the first and second temples in Israel were built with great contributions by world empires. When Israel came out of Egypt, she exited with much of the wealth of Egypt from which she built the tabernacle. The surrounding nations poured their wealth into Solomon’s temple and his beautiful palaces. In the first century, the temple complex was beautified largely by King Herod, who embellished it with decorated stone. It was a glorious achievement, with its great columns, gold and bronze work, acacia wood, ivory, etc. It was obvious that the gross national product of many nations went into this building made with human hands. But when the heavenly temple came to be built, it was not built with human subsidy. In fact, the builders rejected it. The authorities in Jerusalem regarded the corner stone as unfit for God’s Kingdom.

There were many opinions among the Jews as to how the Kingdom of God would appear. The Essenes, who valued asceticism, thought that Messiah would inaugurate the kingdom in the wilderness. The Sadducees, the wealthy landowners who had the ear of the Romans, were investors in the earthly Jerusalem and they were comfortable with the status quo. The Pharisees, who were not part of the temple, but who wanted to democratize the Torah so as to get the temple into the home, added all of their legalities in order to do so. The Zealots felt that the kingdom would be introduced by the sword and revolution, by overthrowing Rome. They had no use for any of the other groupings.

Jesus fit none of these categories, however (see Luke 7:31-35), and thus he was rejected and set aside. Here is what Isaiah says of him,

**“For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot [suckling],  
And like a root out of parched ground” (Isa 53:2)**

Isaiah compared Jesus with a tender, green shoot (like a sucker shoot) and a parched root in the soil. He was not a part of mainline Judaism. He did not fit any of the traditional categories. He seemed to have no potential, so the Jews rejected him. “We esteemed Him not,” says Isaiah.

But God says that the very one whom the builders rejected became the corner stone of the new building project. In God’s eyes he

had infinite value. The Word of God alone, not man, would bring about the building of this new temple not built with hands.

When we see this new temple being built worldwide in all its glory, we will say that the Word of God alone and the Spirit of God built this temple. Not only was no human help or no human subsidy utilized in the building, it was built in the face of human opposition. But only the eye of faith can see this building being erected. It is not visible to the world, for the world does not value it.

Woe to us when we crave worldly subsidy, with unrighteous mammon, to build the church! We don’t need it. In fact, the building proceeds better when it is opposed by the government. Then it is built by pure word and pure spirit, to the glory of God.

There is the new temple: New materials, better foundations, and built without human subsidy.

The apostle has a fourth point.

### IV. Constructing the New Demolishes the Old (2:8)

**To those who disbelieve...A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.**

Here we have the amazing revelation that as God is proceeding with the new construction, he is at the same time demolishing the old. Peter quotes from Isaiah 8:14, where the prophet predicted that a flood of judgment (the Assyrian invasion) was about to come upon Israel. But if the nation would repent, and trust in the Lord, in the midst of that judgment God would become a sanctuary to them. If they refused to make the Lord the rock of their trust, however, this same rock would crush them like a great stone carried by a raging torrent. Peter says that Jesus was that stone. For some, it would be a sanctuary to flee to; for others, it would be a rock of judgment.

Jesus said he had come to build his new temple, and in the process the old would be torn down. In the Olivet Discourse he said, “My word will be vindicated because this old temple will be destroyed in the midst of the birth of the new, so woe to you rich who have invested in Jerusalem. You will see the Roman armies coming. Then you must get out of Jerusalem. Flee to the hill country. Pray that this will not happen in winter.” Between the announcement of that gospel and the coming was a 40-year period. They had 40 years to repent. The believing remnant read this text in the Olivet Discourse and they repented and fled Jerusalem. Then the Romans came and destroyed the city.

The year A.D. 70 is a very important date in world history. This was the date that vindicated the word of Jesus as a prophet. What he said was right; all the rest of Judaism was wrong. His kingdom was built and the earthly kingdom was destroyed.

So that we can enter into and experience this holocaust which occurred when the Roman armies invaded Jerusalem, I will read part of the account by the contemporary historian, Josephus, describing the fire in the temple:

While the holy house was on fire, everything was plundered that came to hand, and 10,000 of those that were caught were slain; nor was there a commiseration of any age, or any reverence of gravity; but children, and old men, and profane persons, and priests, were all slain in the same manner...as well as those that made supplication for their lives, as those that defended themselves by fighting. The flame was also carried a long way, and made an echo, together with the groans of those who were slain; and because this hill was

high, and the works at the temple were very great, one would have thought that the whole city had been on fire.

Nor can one imagine anything either greater or more terrible than this noise; for there was at once a shout of Roman legions, who were marching all together, and a sad clamor of the seditious, who were now surrounded with fire and sword. The people also that were left above were beaten back upon the enemy, and under a great consternation, and made sad moans at the calamity they were under; the multitude also that was in the city joined in this outcry with those that were upon the hill; and beside many of those that were worn away by the famine, and their mouths almost closed when they saw the fire of the holy house, they exerted their utmost strength, and broke out into groans and outcries again...

Yet was the misery itself more terrible than this disorder; for one would have thought that the hill itself, on which the temple stood, was seething-hot, as full of fire on every part of it, that the blood was larger in quantity than the fire and those that were slain more in number than those that slew them; for the ground did nowhere appear visible, for the dead bodies that lay on it; but the soldiers went over heaps of these bodies, as they ran upon such as fled from them.

In that year of A.D. 70, 1,200,000 Jews died in Jerusalem! They died because they failed to believe the word of Jesus that judgment was coming. They had invested in Jerusalem and had lost everything. But for the believing remnant of Jews who took the word of Jesus seriously, the stone became a sanctuary, not the means of their destruction.

I personally feel that what happened in Israel in the years A.D. 33-70 is a microcosm of world history. Just as Israel as a nation had the gospel preached to them and had opportunity to repent before the judgment came, so Jesus says, in the Olivet Discourse, that as the kingdom goes forth to the Gentile nations it will be born in the midst of labor pains, famine, wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes. All of these disasters will break down the old, created order, and at the same time give birth to the new order, the church of Jesus Christ. What happened to Israel in that day is happening in the nations of the world throughout the age. The judgment of an earthquake which we experienced in these past few days is nothing compared to the judgment that is yet to come. Think of the great tribulation, when God will pour out his wrath in full measure on all the nations. But this destruction of the old will give birth to the new. At the end, the only thing that will be left standing will be the new temple. This is the point of the text.

A couple who are friends of mine lost their home in the earthquake on Tuesday. Due to faulty construction, their home slid off its foundations, down the side of a hill. When I visited them, the husband told me that although they had lost everything, he had made a list of more than 200 things for which he could be thankful in the midst of the disaster which had struck. Christian friends had given them gifts of money, places to stay, meals, everything. The old had been destroyed, but these "living stones" were precious and beautiful to behold. The highlight of my week was talking with this couple and hearing them express their thanksgiving to God for what he was doing. They are part of the new construction, the living temple which is being built.

Here then are the qualities of God's new construction: New materials, new foundation, no human subsidy, and the new demolishes the old.

Our text answers the question, "If you can't trust the ground you walk on, what can you trust?" in two commands: Come, and believe. Come to Jesus, and put your trust in him. When I was remodeling my home, I discovered that I had to use anchor bolts to anchor the house to its foundations. Then, when an earthquake strikes, the home will not slip from its foundations. If you are not anchored in Jesus Christ, it doesn't matter how good are the foundations of the new temple. You cannot be loosely associated with this stone. It's no use coming to church or religious meetings if you are not firmly anchored.

Come to Jesus, believe in him, and anchor your life in him. Make that foundation your life's trust. Then, when the judgment comes, you will not be found in haste. You will be secure, and you can worship in peace. My friends lost their home because it was not tied to its foundations. But they were not tied to their home. They had anchored themselves to the living stone. If you do the same, then you can say with the author of the book of Hebrews,

**And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." And this expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire. (Heb 12:26-29)**

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