

November 25, 2007 by Steve Brandon



Living Stones

1 Peter 2:4-8

1. Come to Him (verse 4).
2. Work for Him (verse 5).
3. Believe in Him (verses 6-8).

When the Scripture speaks about the church of Jesus Christ, it uses various word pictures to describe it.

The church is described as a **flock** of sheep. The Lord is our shepherd (Ps. 23:1; 1 Peter 5:4). All of us are like sheep, who continually stray (1 Pet. 2:25; Is. 53:6), but Jesus brings them into the fold (John 10:16).

The church is described as a **body**, with hands and eyes and feet and noses. In describing the church, Paul said, "The body is not one member, but many. ... You are Christ's body, and individually members of it" (1 Cor. 12:14, 27).

The church is called a **temple**. Made up of sanctified believers, the church is a holy place where the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor. 6:19), just like He did in the temple of the Jews.

The church is described as a household (1 Tim. 3:15). Members relate to one another as family. Believers are called, "brothers" and "sisters" (1 Tim. 5:1-2).

The church is described as the "bride of Christ." In Ephesians 5, Paul describes Christ's love for the church and says that a husband's love for his wife ought to have the same degree of passion. At the end of the book of Revelation, we see the gathered church described as "the bride," who has "made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7).

In our text this morning, Peter will use the metaphor of a building to describe the church. As you read the text below, see if you can detect this word picture.

1 Peter 2:4-8

And coming to Him as to 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.

In every single verse of our text, we see Peter talking about "stones" (verses 4, 5, 6, 7, 8). Verse 4 says that we come to a living stone. Verse 5 states that we all are living stones. Verse 6 describes how God has placed a choice stone. Verse 7 speaks of the stone that is rejected. Verse 8 says that people stumble over a stone. Another feature that we see in these words is the repeated mention of building and builders. Verse 5 mentions a spiritual house. Verse 7 talks of builders rejecting the stone.

In our culture today, when we build our homes, we often build them out wood. For larger buildings, we use steel. But, in Peter's day, the material that they used in building homes and buildings were stones. This passage uses this fact and describes the community of believers as a building that Christ is building. But, the passage isn't so much about the church which God is building. It's more about our relationship to Christ, the living stone. We are living stones as well, because He is the chief stone. Many refuse to come to this cornerstone. My message this morning is entitled, "Living Stones"

Living stones, ...

1. Come to Him (verse 4).

Look once again at verse 4, "And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God."

Peter's thought has moved naturally from the previous section to this one. Last week, we looked at verses 1-3, in which Peter exhorted us to "desire the pure milk of the word." One of the reasons why we ought to do so is because of the Lord's kindness. He ends in verse 3 by saying, "if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."

When someone is kind to you, you are naturally drawn to them, and so also with the kindness of the Lord. As I have noticed people over the years, one thing has become evident. Those who are kind and gracious and loving and gentle and giving never lack people around them who

are naturally drawn to them. But, show me one who is grumpy and harsh with words and judgmental, and I will show you someone with few friends. So it is with God. He is kind and gracious and loving and compassionate. He gives us every reason to come to Him. And when we come, indeed, we "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8). Even unbelievers are drawn by God's kindness. Romans 2:4, "The kindness of God leads you to repentance."

Here in verse 4, Peter describes us coming to our merciful and loving God. Peter isn't describing the act of salvation in which one repents of his sin and turns to Christ. Rather, he's describing the process whereby we, as believers, come near to God on a continual basis. We may come with a heart of praise, "Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15). We may come in a time of need, "Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). Indeed, Jesus is a friend of sinners who receives all who come to Him. And living stones come to him.

However we come, we come to Jesus, whom Peter describes here as "a living stone." This has a veiled reference to His resurrection. Jesus isn't the dead stone of a pagan temple. Rather, Jesus is the stone who is alive and well. Yes, Jesus died. But, He rose again and lives forever. And He ever lives "to make intercession" for those who draw near to Him in faith (Heb. 7:25).

And though we, as believers in Christ, may indeed come to Jesus, there are many who refuse to come to him. Peter identifies these in the next phrase. "the living stone ... has been rejected by men." This hasn't caught God off guard. Psalm 2 prophesied that the Messiah would be rejected. "The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us'" (Ps. 2:2-3). When Jesus actually came to His own people, they refused to receive Him (John 1:11). They heard His claims. They saw His deeds. They witnessed His life. And they hated Him. They ended up crucifying "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). When you boil it all down, Jesus was crucified because Jesus exposed their sin. Jesus said, "The Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

Several thousand years later, we see the same thing happening. People are still rejecting this "living stone" today. It doesn't take much to pick up the newspaper and see how our nation is continually turning from Him. It doesn't take much to watch the evening news and see those who have rejected His reign in their lives. It doesn't take much to be in any public place and hear the name of our God blasphemed! And though men may reject the stone (as we see here, it really doesn't matter), because there is One who has received this stone. It's God, Himself.

In verse 4 we see that although Jesus "has been rejected by men," He is "choice and precious in the sight of God" (verse 4). And do you know what? That's the only thing that really matters in the long run.

Picture with me the owner (and president) of a corporation. When the owner is old in years and ready to retire, there comes a time to decide who will take over the company. It doesn't matter much what the workers in the company really think. What matters most is the opinion of the owner. When he appoints his son as the next president, it's going to happen. If those in the company reject his decision, they are free to leave the company. Surely the son will be able to find other willing workers to take their place.

So it is with Christ and God, the Father. It doesn't much matter that Jesus was rejected by men. God has accepted Him. God has appointed Him as the foundation of the church. And those who reject Him are free to go their way. It's not going to change God's choice of His foundation stone.

Jesus is the chosen stone (according to verse 4). He is the one whom God elected to be the cornerstone. God had long ago chosen Jesus to be the foundation of the church. In Isaiah 42:1 we read, "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations."

And when Jesus actually walked upon the earth, God had made it clear that He was His chosen One. There was a day when Jesus took Peter and James and John up on a mountain. While they were up there, the appearance of Jesus was transfigured to become exceedingly white. A voice came out of heaven describing who this was who was so changed, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" (Luke 9:35).

We do listen to Him. That's why we, as believers, draw near to this living stone. Though we don't see Him, and though we haven't see Him, we still love Him (1 Pet. 1:8), and continually "come to Him as to a living stone." But some don't.

Let's return again to the illustration of the owner (and president) of the company who appoints his son as the next president. We can think of all types of reasons why people refuse to submit to this son as the new president. Perhaps it was the father who built the business and who really knows the business. The son has only seen things from the top, and has never done the work, which will make it difficult for him to make proper business decisions. Perhaps the son doesn't have the ability to run the business. He's not the high-energy guy that you need to run to company. Perhaps the son doesn't have the vision to go forward, which means that the company is eventually headed for disaster.

But, when people reject Jesus as their ruler, they have none of these excuses. Jesus began the church. It was through the death and resurrection that the church began. Jesus demonstrated much sacrifice, giving His blood to purchase the church (Acts 20:28). Jesus can sympathize with each and every one of us, because He "has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Jesus is also very capable of guiding the church.

Any one who rebels against Jesus, has no good reason to turn against Him. They simply don't want to be governed by Jesus. But, regardless of their preferences, God has chosen Jesus to be "the head of the church" (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 1 Cor. 11:3). Because, from God's perspective, Jesus is "precious" in His sight (verse 4). God considers the work of His Son and cherishes it. If He is precious to God, then He is precious to other living stones, who (1) come to Him (verse 4).

Living stones, ...

2. Work for Him (verse 5).

In verse 5, Peter continues with the metaphor of the church as a building, when he addresses each of us. Jesus is identified in verse 4 as “a living stone.” And now, in verse 5, we are identified as “living stones” as well. “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” (verse 5). Each of us have God-given duties to perform.

Have you ever looked at an old house or chimney or wall that is built by stone and mortar? Stones of all shapes and sizes are placed carefully in the structure to form its shape. As stones don't fit exactly perfect together, the cracks are filled with mortar to make the wall (or chimney) hold together. Though I have seen many walls like this, I have never actually seen a mason build such a wall, but I can envision it. Certainly, there is a big pile of stones someplace. As the mason begins the wall, he places a few large stones at the base of the wall. Once the stones are placed, he walks over to the pile to see what sort of stones would fit nicely upon these stones. At various times, he shapes them up and sizes them to see if they will work for him. When he has found his stone, he puts some mortar down, and places the stone where it goes. In the process, He creates yet another puzzle to be solved with yet another perfectly placed rock.

This is what Jesus does in building His church. But, rather than a pile of stones, He has a pile of believers. He takes each of us and considers how best to place us into His church, which He has promised to build (Matt. 16:18). And Jesus places us into the wall and ceiling and floor as He pleases. When using the metaphor of the body in 1 Corinthians 12:18, Paul writes, “God has placed the members [of the body], each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.” As stone is placed upon stone, soon we see the “spiritual house” begin to take shape. It looks exactly as Jesus had envisioned in His mind before He even began to build His church.

You can try to picture what this exactly looks like, as people are placed on top of each other and mortar is slapped in between them, with arms and legs protruding from the wall. Or, you can realize that Peter is speaking in a word picture. Peter isn't thinking of a “physical house,” that is built. Rather, he's thinking of a “spiritual house” that is built, exactly as he had planned.

In this “spiritual house,” you see its members performing “spiritual duties.” There is a “holy priesthood,” which “offers up spiritual sacrifices.” These illustrations are taken from the Old Testament, before the time of Christ, when God was teaching us of what it meant to come into His presence. In the Old Covenant that God established with the nation of Israel, priests were needed to slaughter animals and offer them upon the altar as a sacrifice for sins. With the confession of sin and the appropriate sacrifice made, God promised to forgive the sin. But, due to our sinful nature, sins were constantly committed. So, sacrifices always needed to be offered. Therefore, priests were always in demand, performing their sacred duties.

Today, we no longer need a priesthood, because Jesus offered Himself once for all as the perfect sacrifice for sins. We simply need to believe in Him to see our sins washed away. So, Peter isn't now informing us to go and perform animal sacrifices. In verse 5, Peter talks about “spiritual sacrifices” not “animal sacrifices.”

The question can easily come, “what exactly are these spiritual sacrifices?”

Throughout the New Testament, several Christian activities are explicitly described as being “sacrifices,” although no animals are present. For instance, Hebrews 13:15, “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.” Just as the Old Testament priests were engaged in the worship of God with all of their activities, so also do we today engage in our priestly activities when we sing songs of praise to God!

In the very next verse, the writer to the Hebrews uses this terminology again. This time, the sacrifice doesn't come from our lips, but from our hands and feet and pocketbooks. “And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Hebrews 13:16). This verse tells us that the giving of our time and the giving of our finances to others is a sacrifice to God. It's a sacrifice to help others who are in need. It may cost you your Saturday, as you help and serve others. It may cost you some money to purchase food or clothing or other gifts to others. These are New Testament sacrifices.

In Philippians 4:18, Paul wrote to the church at Philippi and said, “I have received ... from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.” In this verse, Paul identifies giving to Christian ministry as a sacrifice, in which God is well pleased. As you give to the ministry of Rock Valley Bible Church, you are offering to God a sacrifice.

These verses give you a pretty good idea of what constitutes a Christian sacrifice today. But, there's another verse that extends the sacrificial terminology beyond these verses. It's Romans 12:1. Listen carefully to what it says, “Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” Just as the lambs upon the altars were killed and burned up and completely dedicated to God, so also ought we to consider our bodies as completely dedicated to God. We are to “present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice.”

Our sacrifices today include all forms of Christian piety. Worship to God. Love for others. Sharing the gospel. Encouraging one another with our words. Serving one another with our gifts. Helping the poorer among us. Praying for others. Teaching others. Giving a cold drink in time of need. With these words, Paul is saying, “Give your life to God, serving Him completely.” That's the picture of a priest: one completely dedicated to God. Although wrong in their theology about these matters, the Roman Catholic priest demonstrates how devoted a priest is. He gives of his life completely to serve the church.

Perhaps you remember the story in the Old Testament of Hannah. She was barren and prayed earnestly for a son. She said, “O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head” (1 Sam. 1:11). When she conceived and brought forth a son, she named him, “Samuel,” which means, “to ask of the LORD” (1 Sam. 1:20). When he was finally

weaned, Hannah brought him up "that he may appear before the LORD and stay there forever" (1 Sam. 1:22). Indeed, that's what happened, when Hannah brought Samuel to the temple for that first time, she handed him over to Eli and said, "I have dedicated him to the LORD; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the LORD" (1 Sam. 1:28). Hanna and Elkanah, her husband, returned to their home in Ramah, "but the boy ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest" (1 Sam. 2:11). This is what a priest is. He is one who is entirely devoted and dedicated to serving the Lord.

Peter is careful to remind us near the end of verse 5 that the only way for our priestly functions to be pleasing to God is through Jesus Christ. Our deeds of love and mercy apart from Him are nothing. But, through trusting in the work of Jesus Christ, our priestly activities become "acceptable to God." This simply means that we aren't taking any credit for the works we do, but are trusting in Christ to work through us. When we give, we aren't giving to be recognized by others. When we pray, we aren't praying to be noticed by others as spiritual people. When we fast, we aren't fasting so that others know of the sacrifice that we are paying. When we serve others, we aren't looking for recognition. When we give praise to God, it's His approval that we want. In this way, our ministry to others comes through Jesus Christ.

At this point, the question of application rightly comes, "Are you performing your priestly duties? Are you regularly presenting your spiritual sacrifices to the Lord?" Because it's through these things that we will see Christ build His church.

Not every priest in the Old Testament was a good priest. Hannah gave her son to Eli to minister to the Lord. As it turned out, Samuel was a blessing. But, Eli's sons were not a blessing. Hophni and Phinehas were their names. To be sure, they were performing their priestly duties. But, they were engaged in other sinful activities at the same time. They took for themselves the meat that was to be burned upon the altar (1 Sam. 2:12-17). There was sexual immorality among them (1 Sam. 2:22). And so, God struck them dead on the same day.

There are plenty of other examples of bad priests in the Old Testament. Samuel's sons "turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice" (1 Sam. 8:3). Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered strange incense upon the altar and God killed them as a result (Lev. 10:1-2). The Lord struck Uzzah down when he defiled the ark (1 Sam. 6). The priests of Malachi's day were allowing faulty sacrifices to be offered upon the altar (Mal. 1).

Are you a good priest or a bad priest? Are you offering up the sacrifices? Or, are you not even performing your duties. Are you offering up good sacrifices? Or, are you offering up faulty sacrifices?

Living stones ...

3. Believe in Him (verses 6-8).

In these verses, Peter grounds his previous thoughts in several passages of Scripture. And thus, he repeats many of the same things. But, the focus of these three verses is upon belief and unbelief.

Peter first quotes from Isaiah 28:16, "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."

This passage comes deep in the heart of the LORD's condemnation of Ephraim. And then, comes this promise of this coming stone in Zion. The one who believes in this stone will not face the condemnation coming upon them.

It's a great text for Peter to bring up to these people who were suffering for their faith. Certainly, there were some who were seeking to place doubts in their minds about their commitment to love and follow Christ. In Peter's second epistle, Peter mentions that mockers who were "mocking [and] following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation'" (2 Pet. 3:3-4). In other words, they were saying, "Christ isn't coming back. Everything remains as it has always been. Everything will be as it currently is. Why are you following this religion stuff?"

The scattered aliens to whom Peter wrote were going through some difficulties as well. As we approach the second half of chapter 2, we are going to see the difficulties that they are facing. They were facing trouble with the governmental authorities, trouble with their work environment, and trouble in their homes. And yet, Peter's promise from the prophet Isaiah surely was a support for these people, "he who believes in Him will not be disappointed" (verse 6). Literally, this says, "he will not be put to shame." This is the sort of promise that you can take to the bank. The Greek construction of these words are emphatic at this point. They are in the double negative. You might easily translate it, "he who believe in Him "will not in any way" be disappointed." Or, "he will not in any way be put to shame."

Do you believe in Christ? Then, you have this promise from the words of the Almighty God: You will not in any way be disappointed. That doesn't mean that your life will be filled with nothing but happiness. Sorrows and trials and difficulties will come in this life. Job made the observation so many years ago, "Man is born for trouble, as sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). As sure as sure can be, you will face hardships in this sin-filled world in which we live. But, at the end of the day, all of the sorrow that you will face in this life will seem as nothing when you enter glory, as one of His own. On that day, you won't be disappointed that you have suffered in the way that you have had here. As Paul said, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18). You won't be disappointed on that day. You won't in any way be ashamed of all of your Christian sacrifice.

Peter's logic is really quite simple. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). When Peter describes the stone in which we trust, he uses two adjectives to describe it: (1) Jesus is a choice stone, and (2) Jesus is a precious stone. These are the exact same descriptions that Peter used back in verse 4. If this stone is precious in God's eyes, nothing else matters. His is the only vote that counts.

This past Thursday was Thanksgiving. After our turkey dinner, we had an opportunity to watch football on television. During commercials, we switched channels to the science channel, in which they were having a marathon on Thanksgiving day. All day long, they were showing episodes from the "How It's Made" show. Which was a quite fascinating show about how everything from ice skates to plastic bags to bottle caps to yarn is made. An interesting thing happened. So many were interested in the "How It's Made" show that they had forgotten that it was

merely a sideshow to the football games that were on the television. I experienced this firsthand on one occasion when I changed the channel back to the football game, because the commercial was finished. There was a strong objection arising from the room.

And so, (being the diplomat that I am), I decided that we would take a vote. As I polled the room, every child and every mother voted for "How It's Made." But, the three dads in the room won the vote, because, each of us got ten votes each. And so, "How It's Made" continued to be the sideshow. [\[1\]](#)

But, that's what Peter is saying here in this text. People may well be ridiculing Jesus and those who follow Him, but, there's only one vote that matters, God's vote! And when God looks at Jesus, He sees Him as a "chosen" stone. Jesus was God's chosen One to atone for the sins of His people. God also sees Jesus as a "precious" stone. Jesus is the stone to be valued above all other stones. So, place your hope in God's chosen, precious stone, and you will never be disappointed, because God's vote is the only one that will count at the end of time.

In verses 7-8, we see the contrast with those who don't believe. "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.'"

The first quote given in verse 7, is from Psalm 118:22, in which the Psalmist writes, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone" (Ps. 118:22). I just love this verse, because it was so prophetic. Hundreds of years before Christ came on the scene, the Psalmist penned these words.

We know the story well. Jesus entered Jerusalem as the Messiah of the Jews. As He was riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, the crowds were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD; Hosanna in the highest!" (Matt. 21:9). These words come from the same Psalm, Psalm 118. So, on the one day, the crowds are praising Him. But, rather than receiving Him as their King, they crucified Him upon a cross as a criminal.

But, the very thing that men attempted to do to eliminate Jesus was the very thing that secured His place as the foundation of the church. His death has become the means through which we are justified. "Christ died for sins, once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). In this way, Jesus has become the most important stone in the church! The cornerstone is the stone from which all measurements are taken. The cornerstone is that stone from which every wall is aligned. The cornerstone is that stone that receives the most attention. That's the rejected stone. Jesus knew that it was going to take place.

Shortly after arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus told a parable to the religious leaders of the day. He said, ...

Matthew 21:33-45

[Jesus said,] "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?"

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."

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; This came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them.

Jesus knew full well that He was going to be rejected by the Pharisees and Sadducees. But, Jesus also knew that His rejection would mean life to His children.

There are those who still reject the stone. And at the beginning of verse 8, we see these people stumbling over Christ. This is a quote from Isaiah 8:14, in which the LORD speaks of the people of Israel stumble over God. Peter rightly applies it to Christ.

The picture given here is crystal clear. People are walking along the road. And there's this stone in the middle of the road. Surely, they would be able to walk around it, but no, they walk right up to the stone and stumble over it. That's what often takes place in the cross. People hear about the cross. People read about the cross. People think about the cross. But, somehow, they simply cannot believe. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Gentiles foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:23). There are some who simply can't believe in a crucified Savior.

It's easy to see why they stumble. Peter says, "they are disobedient to the word" (verse 8). Rather than desiring the word (verse 2), they are disobedient to the word. And in their disobedience, they cannot understand. Last week, I mentioned how John Bunyan had the following inscribed into his Bible: "this book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book." In this case, we see that their sin was keeping them from the Savior.

Peter then closes his discussion of these people at the end of verse 8 with the simple statement, "and to this doom they were also appointed." With these words, we see how exactly it is that prophecy can be so accurate. God doesn't merely predict the future in His foreknowledge. Rather, God also plans the future in the exercise of His sovereignty. These verses say that when someone doesn't believe, there may well be a bigger issue going on. It may well be that they have been appointed to be one of those who are unbelieving.

This text is one of those rare instances in which we see the other side of election. The Scripture is literally flooded with referenced to God's choosing a people for Himself to save from their sins. And yet, here we see people who are hardened in their sin, appointed to unbelief.

At this point, we have two options. First, we can deny these things, as many do. Or second, we can accept what the Scripture says and pray that God will give us understanding in these difficult matters. I believe that the second option is the best.

Please remember, that at the end of time, God will not be blamed for the unbelief of any. They will have only themselves to blame for their unbelief. Those who come to God with a willing, humble heart, will find the Savior. Their belief is an evidence that they are indeed living stones.

As I close, I want to review my outline. Peter's message is that living stones (1) come to Him, (2) work for Him, and (3) believe in Him. If these things are characteristic of you, then be encouraged. But, if not, then take them as an exhortation. Come to Him! Work for Him! Believe in Him! The promise of Scripture is there for you to see. "He who believes in Him will not be disappointed." I can testify that this is true! All of the labor and sacrifice that you give to the Lord never be to you a disappointment on that great and final day. So, come to Him! Work for Him! Believe in Him!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 25, 2007 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Lest you think that I was entirely heartless in these things, we did end up watching quite a bit of "How It's Made," as the football game that was being televised was a blowout. But then again, if the game had been close, I may well have been insensitive to those around me.