

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Peter 2:4 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Coming To Jesus - "The Chosen And Precious Living Stone"

READ: 1 Peter 2:4, with vv.1:18-21 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - God has designed and intends that purifying ourselves is to result in us true believers living in holiness, serving God effectively, and possessing a deep sincere brotherly love for one another. (v.1:22)
 - - Due to the priceless gift of spiritual regeneration that we true believers have received, we are commanded and obligated by God to "therefore, rid ourselves" of the sins listed in verse 2:1.
 - - Sins, such as those listed in verse 2:1, that are engaged in by true believers in a church or ministry bring direct harm to those churches and ministries because they are counterproductive to and bring damage to the important foundational ministry dynamic of extending "love for one another deeply". (v.1:22)
 - - Believers, who engage in any of the sins described in verse 2:1, give direct evidence of their actual stunted and infantile spiritual maturity, and that they are not appropriately feeding on God's written Word. (v.2:2)
 - - Believers, who engage in any of the sins described in verse 2:1, should instead "crave" and appropriately implement comprehensively in their life what God mandates in His written Word so that they "grow up" in the faith. (v.2:2)
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v.4 - READ

[Lesson Question: Who is "...him, the living Stone"? And why is He referred to in this way? What kind of stone can be living? Note: Verses 5-8 go on to elaborate what is meant by referring to Him as "the living Stone", so discussion on this topic may need to be somewhat abbreviated here until these next verses can be fully examined and analyzed.]

SECTION POINT: Jesus is "the living Stone", alive in bodily form and continuing in functioning as the cornerstone for God's plan and program.

"...him, the living Stone"

- - This Book of 1 Peter was written by Peter decades after Jesus died by means of crucifixion on the cross, was buried, resurrected from the dead on the third day, appeared to many of His followers, and then ascended into heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)
- - Here in verse 2:4, Peter distinguishes that he is referring to Jesus, distinctly identifying and stating that the "him" Jesus was "rejected by men but chosen by God", therein dispelling any notion that Peter might be referring here to God the Father as "the living Stone".
- - Peter is testifying here that Jesus is in fact alive, which therefore would include being alive in bodily form - referring to "him" as "the living Stone".

- - Jesus is not a disembodied spirit floating around, lost, and aimlessly wandering in some kind of foggy spirit-world dimension of existence.
- - No, Jesus is (in entirety) exactly as the Triune "God" has "chosen" and planned since "before the creation of the world" (v.1:20) and effectuated (for example v.1:2) during the time in which Peter was alive on the earth. ('triune' - being 3-in-1, which is the distinct deity persons of God the Father / God the Son / God the Holy Spirit existing as one perfectly-united God)
- - Jesus is "living" - which perhaps can be described as holistically functioning in an intelligent sustained self-existing and self-determining manner.
- - Jesus also is the "Stone" - which is further defined in verses 2:5-8 but can be summarily defined here in this discussion of verse 4 as the immovable and perfect key-basis upon which the plan and program of God rests and stems from - like a stone building whose construction first starts with and rests upon the precise laying of a perfect cornerstone.
- - Joining these two words "living" and "Stone" together in the context of verse 4 thereupon produces the additional concept that Jesus has been and is actively involved in orchestrating the continued and further administration and implementation of God's plan and program, even up to and beyond the present time of today.

[Lesson Question: Analyze and expound on the evaluation of God that is contained in the concepts of Jesus being "chosen by God and precious to him". Then, compare your findings of God's evaluation of Jesus to men's evaluation of Jesus, those who "rejected" him.]

SECTION POINT: God the Father chose Jesus and values Him to the utmost, but men judged Jesus to be worthy of outright hostile rejection followed with severe torture and execution.

"chosen by God and precious to him--"

- - Jesus is distinguished here as having been "chosen by God" - indicating that Jesus was and is worthy to be and to fulfill all that is necessary in the functioning as the "living Stone" in God's plan and program - the immovable and perfect key-basis upon which God's entire plan and program rests and stems from.
- - Because God has "foreknowledge" (v.1:2), which is precise and detailed knowledge about what will happen in the future, Jesus was "chosen" or "selected" back then in time because of His ability and forthcoming success at perfectly fulfilling God's plan and program in its many facets. (Strong's #1588)
- - Therein (within the context of verse 4), God regards Jesus as "precious" - being "highly valued, esteemed, cherished, and beloved". (AHD - 'precious')
- - Jesus was not chosen as a last resort, nor a second-rate substitute to do the job.
- - No, Jesus is "precious" - suggesting here that He is the ultimate greatest in being "precious" - of the very highest value that can exist in God's sight.
- - Therefore, a reasonable conclusion is that Jesus was "chosen by God" because His value or 'preciousness' is so extremely high that no one else in all of existence comes close to comparing to what Jesus is and what Jesus will do in the fulfilling of God's plan and program.

"--rejected by men but..."

- - The evaluation, reaction, regard, and reception that Jesus received from "men" was starkly contrary to how God the Father evaluated and regarded Jesus.
- - "Indeed" or "in fact" Jesus was "rejected by men" "but", or in contrast to, or even though He was "chosen" by God the Father, being fully accepted, fully approved, and valued to the highest extreme as "precious" by God the Father. ('indeed' - Strong's #3303 (omitted in the *NIV*))
- - The "indeed" or "in fact" phrase followed by the "but" phrase suggests an emphasis is added to the wording of this concept and reality, probably indicating that it is astounding that men would reject Jesus the "Christ", the Anointed One of God, the "precious" One to God, sent by God, and "chosen" by God to be the "living Stone", the "cornerstone" upon which God's entire plan and program rests, stems from, and is implemented by, in order to provide a way to redeem humans through which they are reconciled to Himself. ("Christ" - v.2:5, Strong's #5547; "cornerstone" - v.2:6; Colossians 1:13-14,19-22)
- - God is going to such extraordinary means and efforts to provide this priceless eternal benefit for humans and yet their response is to "disapprove" and "reject" Jesus the "living Stone" to the fullest extent, rejecting and "refusing to recognize and admit" His "validity", His "authority", His claims and supporting miraculous proofs, His "truth / reality / value / worth", culminating in severely torturing Him unto death by means of crucifixion on a cross. ("reject" - Strong's #0593 with *AHD* - 'repudiate'; v.25 in John 10:24-26)
- - The "living Stone" that God deems as worthy to be "chosen", men deem as deserving of outright hostile "rejection".
- - The "living Stone" upon which God rests, stems, and implements His plan and program, men scoff, accuse, generate false charges against, and condemn.
- - The "living Stone" that God deems as "precious" and highly valued, men deem as deserving of severe torture and death.
- - Jesus endured severe unjust suffering from men even though He was determined by God the Father as being so extremely qualified and valued.
- - Here in verse 2:4, Jesus is being cited as our example, because we true believers are likewise 'Called to Endure Unjust Suffering', the theme of the Book of 1 Peter.

[Lesson Question: Analyze and expound on the dynamics involved with how true believers "as you come to him [Jesus]" while you simultaneously compare each of those dynamics with how the "rejecting men" came to Jesus. What other dynamics can you find cited in 1 Peter chapter 1 through chapter 2:4 of how true believers "as you come to him [Jesus]"? What are the actual dynamics of when non-believers try to come to Jesus?]

SECTION POINT: True believers have a continuous active personal relationship with Jesus, which Jesus intensely desires that non-believers would have as well.

"As you come to him,"

- - Thankfully, not everyone who encountered Jesus at that time rejected Him, which holds true for many persons who have encountered Him by means of the Scriptures during the millennia since then up through today.
- - For many of us humans, we have in effect personally encountered Jesus on a spiritual level through hearing and believing the "gospel... that has been preached to [us]". (v.1:12)

-- As a result, we who are true believers now "come to him", "approaching" Him and "drawing near" to Him, of course on a spiritual level that is real. ("come" - Strong's #4334)

-- In stark contrast to those persons who rejected Jesus, we true believers "come to Jesus":

----- in 'approval', rather than with 'disapproval';

----- in acceptance, rather than with "rejection";

----- in full agreement, recognition, and acknowledgment, rather than 'refusing to recognize and admit His validity, authority, claims, miraculous proofs, truth, reality, value, and worth';

----- in exaltation and worship, rather than with 'severe torture unto death by means of crucifixion on a cross';

----- in warm embrace, rather than with 'outright hostility';

----- in honor, respect, agreeability, proclaiming, defending, and supporting, rather than with 'scoffing, accusing, generating false charges against, and condemning'.

-- From chapter 1 through chapter 2 verse 4 of the Book of 1 Peter that we have studied so far, we true believers also "come to Jesus":

----- in belief - "even though [we] do not see Him now, [we] believe in him" (v.1:8);

----- in love - "though [we] have not seen him, [we] love him" (v.1:8);

----- in obedience and willing submission - "as obedient children" (v.1:14);

----- in joy - we "are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy" (v.1:8);

----- in enlightenment, aware and informed of who and what Jesus is and what He has accomplished - "For [we] know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that [we] were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to [us] from [our] forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (vv.1:18-19);

----- in gratitude - "[He] was revealed in these last times for [our] sake" (v.1:20), and "...[we] believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for [we] are receiving the goal of [our] faith, the salvation of [our] souls" (vv.1:8-9);

----- in awe, honor, and respect - "the living Stone... chosen by God and precious to him" (v.2:4), "[we] were redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (vv.1:18-19);

----- in acknowledgment of His extreme high value, and through worship verbally proclaiming His immeasurable worth and worthiness - "chosen by God and precious to him" (v.2:4);

----- in humbleness - "For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall..." (v.1:24);

----- in wisdom from God-given experience - "now that you have tasted that the Lord is good" (v.2:3);

----- in an alive relationship with Jesus because He is living - "the living Stone" (v.2:4);

----- in a personal relationship with Jesus who continues to actively implement aspects of God's plan and program - we have been given "new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (v.1:3), and "as you come to him, the living Stone" (v.2:4);

- - - - in a continuous and ongoing active personal relationship with Jesus - "as you come to him" (v.2:4);
- - - - in an assured approach - "as you come to him" (v.2:4).

- - True believers inherit a personal relationship with Jesus, which automatically starts the moment in which they individually place their faith in Him, that He died on the cross to pay the punishment they deserve for their own sins and that He resurrected from the dead on the third day. (John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

- - Jesus is "living" and He is approachable - "as you come to him".

- - For true believers, we can "come to [Jesus]" personally in prayer at any time - day or night.

- - Jesus wants us true believers to "come to him" in prayer - and throughout every day. (cf. Ephesians 6:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:17)

- - For all other persons, who are not authentic true believers, they may think they can and are coming to Jesus, but in reality they are not "coming to [Jesus]" in a personal relationship because they have not properly placed their faith in Him to pay the punishment for their sins through His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead on the third day. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 10:24-30)

- - Yet, Jesus intensely desires that each technically non-believer would sincerely place their faith in Him, so that they can then and thereafter "come to him" in a personal relationship. (John 10:9-11,14-15; Matthew 9:36-38)

BIG IDEA: God the Father values and chose Jesus as the living cornerstone of His redemption plan for the priceless benefit of humans, but astoundingly, men violently rejected Jesus.

IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS:

- - For those of you here who are true believers, deep down inside, what is your evaluation of Jesus?

- - Do you personally regard Jesus as being worthy to be the living cornerstone in your life?

- - If so, have you made Jesus the immovable and perfect key-basis in your life, the living cornerstone upon which your life becomes and stays aligned with the plan and program of God for you personally?

- - Have you been submitting and collaborating with Jesus as the Lord of your life, yielding to His will and striving to be like Him as He actively works to orchestrate the continued and further administration and implementation of God's plan and program in your life and through your life, even throughout each day? (Philippians 2:13; Colossians 1:27-29)

- - Or, instead of establishing and maintaining Jesus as the living cornerstone in your life, do you essentially restrict Jesus to being only your ticket to heaven, and nothing more?

-- Do you in fact spew forth pious words that sound exalting of Jesus when you are with true believers but in reality your pious words are hollow of true meaning for you in your life?

-- Is Jesus "precious" to you - actually and genuinely being highly valued, esteemed, cherished, and beloved by you?

-- Or instead, is Jesus a 'whatever' for you - 'whatever' God wants is for Him to decide but in reality you are doing all that you can to not allow the 'whatevers' from God to affect or interfere with how you want to run your life?

-- Do you "come to [Jesus]", distinctly and intentionally "approaching" Him and "drawing near" to Him on a spiritual level within such activities as fervent prayers, heart-felt worship, impassioned songs of praise, genuine proclamations of exaltation, in-depth Bible studies, and unashamed witnessing to non-believers about Him?

-- Or instead, do you approach Jesus by means of using His name as a cuss word or curse word? (James 3:9-10)

-- Have you made a determination that you indeed possess a continuous and ongoing active personal relationship with Jesus? And do you firmly and consistently hold that determination?

-- Or instead, do you waver or flip-flop back and forth, essentially basing whether or not you have a personal relationship with Jesus upon how you currently feel and your emotions, or how circumstances are going for you in your life?

-- Have you ever contemplated about at the time when you die, what you will do / what you will say upon being forthrightly escorted right up to Jesus, who is seated on the throne in heaven? How will you approach Jesus then? Will that be different than how you approach Jesus now?

-- For those of you here who have not properly placed your faith in Jesus, that He died on the cross to pay the punishment for your sins and that He resurrected from the dead on the third day, understand that:

--- God loves you; (John 3:16)

--- God the Father is actively working to draw you to Jesus; (John 6:44-45)

--- God wants you to properly place your faith in Jesus so that you too will have an ongoing active personal relationship with Jesus, "the chosen and precious living Stone", and you will have all the other blessings that accompany that relationship with Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:3-4; Colossians 1:12)

-- But understand that in your current state of technically rejecting Jesus as your Savior, God steadfastly refuses for you to have an actual personal relationship with Jesus and all the eternal blessings that come with that relationship until you do sincerely and correctly place your faith in Jesus as having taken the punishment that you deserve for your sins. (John 14:6-7,10; 1 John 5:9-13)

-- Do you think it is wise to continue to technically reject Jesus, "the living Stone" - the "precious" One that God "chose" to provide a way for you to get all of your sins forgiven and receive eternal life?

[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - Notice the word "living" (v.2:4) in reference to Jesus Christ here, and to the Word of God in verse 1:23, and to our hope from a new birth in verse 1:3. Compare these three references, noting the similarities and differences in context of their surrounding verses. From your comparing, what additional declarations are being made here?

- - Engage in the same kind of comparing for the word "chosen" in verses 2:4, 1:20, and 2:6.

- - Engage in the same kind of comparing for the word "precious" in verses 2:4, 1:19, and 2:6. Hint: also see 1 Corinthians 1:30.]

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