

## ***MEET THE LIVINGSTONES, 1PETER 2:4-10***

A New Hope #4

♦**Intro:** Parents sometimes are very careful when naming their kids because of how other children might twist them into something ugly. One little Somalian boy was named Mamaduo, but his classmates made it Mamasdoodoo. James Dobson says they named their daughter Denae because they couldn't come up with any messed up version of it, but when she went to school some youngster quickly dubbed her "Decay". Little 7 year old Ava came home crying because some boy at school has started calling her Ava-cado. On the other side, my niece DeeDee married a Burmese man named Winner. Winner' dad wanted him to grow up a successful, hard-working, productive person, so he named him Winner. You know, that's exactly what he is! He excels at whatever he does. He's a leader. He's a go-getter. He's a Jesus-follower. Names can be powerful for good or for bad.

♦Now we've already seen in our study of Peter's letter that suffering and hardship go hand in hand with being a Christian in a sinful world. It's gonna happen one way or another. In our text today Peter essentially gives the scattered Christians of Asia Minor, titles and names to build their confidence and hope in spite of the suffering they will endure as followers of God. Peter is reminding the church of the pedigree God has bestowed on them. And what a pedigree it is! Peter is essentially saying, "Let me remind you who you are in Christ."

♦**1. The Church is God's House.** It's hard to miss the building image in Peter's description.

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♦v5,7,9 The terms "builders", "being built", and "house" all have the same root in Greek: oikos/ house.

♦v4 calls Jesus the living stone rejected by men. And v5 calls Jesus followers living stones as well. And so the Livingstone Family is introduced! This is an Old Testament description of the Messiah God said would come!

♦*Isaiah 28:16 So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.*

♦Just as a cornerstone sets out the lines of the foundation of a building, Jesus is the guiding foundation of the Church, God's house. But also remember, God's House is alive! Just as a capstone is the final top wedge in an arch that allows it to stand, so Jesus is the necessary ingredient, the keystone of God's house. But also remember, God's House is living!

♦When Peter tells the scattered congregations of Christians in the Roman Empire that they are God's house or Temple, he's telling them that they are an extension of what God began a long, long time ago with the nation of Israel. Israel was formed to be the place where God lived in the world! Psalm 147 says he revealed himself to Israel. He did this for no other nation! Israel was the Temple, so to speak, for the world. And now every believer in Jesus is part of that place where God choses to live in this world; part of his house! Listen to how the Apostle Paul put it!

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♦ *Ephesians 2:19-22* Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

♦ Do you realize the weight of this truth? As a believer in Jesus, you, my friend, are part of the location where God is in this world. Paul says the Holy Spirit takes up residence inside God's people. That makes you a portal for the Holy Spirit. People don't need to travel to a mountain shrine to hear from God, or to experience him. He lives in his Church, wherever his Church is. Let me remind us that this is a communal thing. None of us are the Church as individuals, only as a community. There is no being a Christian on your own. That's a contradiction. The Church is a living house, or household, God's family.



♦ **2. The Church is The Chosen.** "Chosen" comes from the Greek term *eklectos*, like our term "selected", verbally picked out, chosen. The Chosen People is what Israel was called. In fact, Peter here is thinking of the great Exodus from Egypt, when Israel became a nation, and at the foot of Mt. Sinai met God and he declared:

♦ *Exodus 19:4-6* You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought



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*you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'*

♦At Passover the Jewish people describe their deliverance from Egypt as a call "from darkness into light." Peter quotes this too. Peter is telling the Church that they are God's New Israel, his chosen people.

♦A. As a person following Jesus this means that you were not waited for, or merely hoped for, but that God came looking for you! This is very securing, isn't it? It means that all the blessing we experience of his provisions, of his forgiveness of our sin over and over, are not originating with our fateful decision, or because by chance we decided for God. God's action is behind your believing. If left up to you, you would not belong. But if you do belong, its because God wanted you and continues to want you. No believer is an accident. Every believer is hand picked by God.

♦B. To belong to God's house, to be wanted is especially incredible considering our natural state of sin and of not even wanting to be wanted by him.

♦v10 *once you were not a people but now...*

♦v11 *once you had not received mercy but now...*

♦This is a direct reference to the life of Hosea, one of Israel's prophets. I feel sorry for two kids born to the prophet Hosea. God told Hosea to marry a prostitute and have a family with her,

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to illustrate that he, God, was married to the prostitute Israel who was unfaithful to him. God told Hosea to name one daughter Loruhamah and one son Loammi. Those names mean "not loved" and "not mine". Can you imagine those poor kids in grade school?

◆God was warning Israel for being unfaithful. The way they spent their evenings after work was not what he wanted his kids doing. What they did to other kids at school was not acceptable. What they let their children watch or read, was not wholesome. What they did when their employers weren't in the room was not kosher. So God was saying through Hosea, "You guys aren't my kids. You're not my kind. You've been cheating on me and ignoring my commands. I'm not putting up with it."

◆But if you read on in the book of Hosea, you discover that God had a restorative plan. God says through Hosea that he's gonna trip up his bar-hopping, bed-swapping, cheating wife Israel. He's going to make her life difficult. He's going to quit protecting her from illness, and poverty. He's going to cut off her funding, etc. And then when she can see no way to go on, he's going to come and speak gently, and pick her up, and bring her home, and remarry her, and even make her garden produce again,

◆*Hosea 2:23 I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'*

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◆Do you see the nature of your Heavenly Father's passion for you? Israel was having an affair or two or three, worshipping other gods and forgetting the true one. God had every reason and right to leave them as "Not Loved" and "Not Mine." But that's not his heart! Not for a moment did the sins they were guilty of, or the hardship he allowed them call into questions his love.

◆Hosea 1:8-10 After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. Then the LORD said, "Call him Lo-Ammi, for you are not my people, and I am not your God. "Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.

◆This is who you are as the family of Jesus! You are precious. In other words you are desperately wanted in spite of your own sinful desperation. You are The Chosen. You are The Loved. God wants to share life with you till death do you part, and he has a fix for that too.

◆Please don't overlook this. People in their suffering have admitted to me that while they know the Bible says God loves us, they are starting to believe he does not like them much. Their suffering is breaking down their security in his love. This is why Peter is retelling them of their identity.

◆Just as Jesus is the precious cornerstone, so believers are precious. That's why God calls them a Holy Nation. Holy means special, set apart, prized and clean.



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♦*Ps.116:15 **Precious** in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."*

♦Psalms 72:14 He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for **precious** is their blood in his sight.

♦Isaiah 43:1,4 But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine...you are **precious** and honored in my sight

♦That term precious is most often used to describe a jewel! Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God sent to redeem you from your sin? Then that's you! You are a jewel to God. A precious stone that's alive! A Livingstone! Now, we might be a diamond in the rough, but a diamond in the making, nothing less!

### **♦3. The Church is a Kingdom of Priests.**

♦1 Peter 2:5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

♦Now granted, our translation says "royal priesthood" but like I showed you earlier, this is a quote from Exodus 19 which says "kingdom of priests." It can also be translated "king-priests." Either way you get the image, don't you? God's family has a special, high, calling of royalty. In Israel, the Levite tribe was special. They were the priests who worked in the Temple. They were the go-betweens for the people and God. In similar fashion, God declares his Church, his Household are all his priests in the

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world. They are the tribe of Levi among all the nations and tribes of the Earth. A priest was the one to declare God's word and remind the people of God's commands, as well as his love and forgiveness. The priest offered the sacrifices for the people.

♦So if you are a follower of Christ, you are also his special envoy in your world. God reveals himself in his Word, and he reveals his Word through his priestly family. You.

♦*v9 that you may declare the praises of him*

♦A lot of church attenders assume their preacher or a minister is a priest, a go-between for people and God. They think, *"It's not my job to declare God into my world. It's not my job to be holy. It's not my calling to look like I belong to Jesus. That's the preachers job. We pay him to be good. The rest of us are good for nothing. So that rules us out."*

♦Wrong! A preacher is a trainer, an assistant, your equipper. But all of us together, we are the Kingdom of Priests. If you love Jesus, say this, "I am in a family of priests!" Do you realize how special you are? You are a light in darkness. Don't pass it off or downplay it!

♦**Conclusion:** Our text today has dwelt on the undeservedly high and lofty identity of a believer. It is meant to build our courage, I think. But there's one little cautionary part embedded in the text which we can not overlook. It's in v7-8

♦1 Peter 2:7-8 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become



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the capstone," and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

♦The Christian Faith clearly proclaims that this person Jesus is the cornerstone, the keystone, the capstone of human hope. Jesus is the one stone that will either make you or break you. The destiny of every individual depends on him alone. Luke the historian records in the Book of Acts that after Peter, our author, healed a crippled man in Jesus name he was arrested and questioned. This is what he said.

♦*Acts 4:10-12 It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is " 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*

♦ Jesus is either a precious stone/jewel, or a stumbling stone that gets in your way. You cannot just not deal with him! God the Father has made Jesus his Son the crux of humanity. You owe it to yourself to find out which kind of stone he is for you. Does the passionate love of the forgiving God warm your heart? Will you repent and bow to his Lordship in your life? Then "you will never be put to shame." Then you know in hindsight you are his Chosen, his royal priest in the world. You belong to God! Rejoice!

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◆On the other hand, does Jesus seem an annoyance to you, getting in the way of your desires, causing you irritation by the claims he makes? That would indicate a destiny not so very bright or hopeful at all. May I suggest you keep digging into his teaching? May I suggest you consider him a serious topic to find out about? I urge your heart to wrestle with who Jesus really is.