

## That The World May Know: In the Dust of the Rabbi – Session 4: Living Stones

### Building a Temple for God

In ancient times, people built temples to make a god's presence known in the community in a big way. When Jesus' disciples began making disciples in Asia Minor, how would the people around them recognize the presence of God? How would people who expected glorious temples and "free stuff" see the God of the disciples?

1. Of what is God's temple, sometimes called God's "spiritual house," comprised? What is its purpose? How is that purpose fulfilled?  
1 Peter 2:1 – 12

2. Work through describing the early church in Jerusalem shortly after Pentecost.  
Acts 2:42 – 47

In what ways were these disciples being a temple to God and putting His presence on display?

What kind of impact did the temple of disciples have on those who saw it?

3. During His ministry on earth, Jesus went out into the Decapolis, the Gentile world close to Galilee.  
Matthew 15:29 – 37

What happened when the presence of God as displayed in the body of Jesus showed up?

How did the people respond?

What does this suggest about the impact that the body of Jesus — the temple of His Spirit — should have in today's world?

### The Stones of God's Temple

Temples were everywhere in the ancient world and they were built almost entirely of stone. So the inspired writers of Scripture had opportunities to use rich, stone-related metaphors to describe God and His people. Jews, and many Gentiles, recognized the importance of Jesus when He is described as the cornerstone.

1. Several key passages will help form a picture of who is being built into God's temple and how it all fits together. Describe the stone (the persons) and the part built.  
Psalm 118:22 – 23  
Isaiah 28:16  
Isaiah 33:5 – 6  
1 Corinthians 3:11  
Ephesians 2:19 – 20  
1 Peter 2:4 – 6

Who is the foundation of the temple of the Holy Spirit — the cornerstone from which all the other stones are fitted?

Who is the capstone, the final stone that holds all the other stones together?

Who were the stones of God's temple in Priene?

2. What metaphor does Paul use to describe Jesus? What does the Bible say about the spiritual heritage of those who follow Jesus?  
1 Corinthians 10:1 – 4
3. From which rock are those who seek the Lord cut?  
Isaiah 51:1 – 2

Who else has come from that same quarry?

### You Are a Living Stone!

Rock, a common sight in the Middle East, is often used as a metaphor in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. Jesus the Messiah is portrayed as the Rock. Rock is also a symbol for God and His faithfulness. So God's people used stones as monuments to God's faithfulness. The idea that God would refer to His people as living stones that He was building into a temple to display His faithfulness would not have seemed at all unusual to Jesus' disciples and the early believers.

1. As you read each of the following Scriptures, consider the purpose of the stones, what they communicated at the time, and what they would communicate to later generations.  
Genesis 35:1 – 15  
Exodus 20:25  
Exodus 24:1 – 5  
Joshua 3:14 – 4:9  
Joshua 24:19 – 27  
1 Kings 5:15 – 18  
1 Kings 7:9 – 12
2. What similarities are there between what a temple represents and what the living stone stones represent?
3. How do you know that the Spirit of God lives in each individual "living stone"? What does that make every believer?  
1 Corinthians 6:19 – 20  
Romans 8:9 – 11

4. Consider God's temple.  
1 Corinthians 3:16  
Ephesians 2:19 – 22  
1 Peter 2:5

Of what is God's temple made?

## A Place for Every Living Stone

Nothing is more lifeless than stone. Yet in the right hands and right circumstances, nothing is more useful, lasting, and beautiful. When God uses stones and rocks as His instruments, great miracles happen. One of those miracles is the way God is building the “living stories” of all believers into a magnificent temple that will display His honor and glory to the world. God gives every believer — every living stone — a unique and important place in His temple.

1. The apostle Paul gives a picture of the importance of each and every believer in the body of Christ — another common image used to refer to the whole community of people who follow Jesus.  
1 Corinthians 12  
  
1 Corinthians 12:4 – 11 — What are the different gifts God gives to members of His community?  
How would these gifts show the greatness of God to the World?  
  
1 Corinthians 12:12 – 27 Why did God make so many different parts?  
Is any part of the body of Christ more important than another?
2. Who shapes and fits us to be the living stones of God’s temple? What are some of the ways by which we are shaped?  
Hebrews 3:4  
Ephesians 2:21 – 22  
Jeremiah 23:29
3. How might your life be different if you remember, every day, that you are God’s presence — a “living stone” in His “temple” — wherever you are? To whomever you are with?

## A Community of Love

Christians today often emphasize correct doctrine or adherence to certain practices as the proof of our faith. These are essential, of course, but doctrine and ritual do not prove our faith to anyone. They do not make a suitable temple to display the greatness and goodness of God to the world. Jesus told His disciples what kind of temple the world would notice.

1. How would people in cities like Priene know that the faith of the disciples of Jesus was genuine?  
John 13:31 – 38
2. What kinds of things destroy love in the body of Christ as well as its testimony?  
1 Corinthians 3:1 – 4  
1 Corinthians 6:1 – 8
3. What was Jesus’ prayer for His disciples? What did he want for them and why is it significant? What would the world know if believers lived this way?  
John 17:20 – 26  
  
In what way was this prayer answered in the lives of the early Christians? In what ways is it being answered in the lives of Christians today?
4. What in God’s eyes is truly valuable in the community of faith? What does God command his community — his “temple” — to do and for what purpose?  
Galatians 5:1 – 6  
1 Peter 2:9 – 12
5. In the context of the passages for Question 4, how does the tendency of many believers today to reduce faith to theology and the transfer of information affect unbelieving people around us?

## References

Genesis 35	Genesis 41
Exodus 18	Exodus 20
Exodus 24	Exodus 28
Exodus 34	Leviticus 19
Leviticus 23	Deuteronomy 10
Deuteronomy 27	Joshua 3
Joshua 4	Joshua 24
1 Kings 5	1 Kings 18
2 Chronicles 7	Psalms 118
Isaiah 28	Isaiah 33
Isaiah 51	Jeremiah 23
Daniel 3	Daniel 6
Matthew 13	Matthew 15
Matthew 24	Matthew 25
Matthew 26	Mark 6
Mark 13	Luke 5
Luke 21	John 13
John 15	John 17
Acts 2	Acts 17
Romans 8	Romans 12
1 Corinthians 3	1 Corinthians 6
1 Corinthians 10	1 Corinthians 12
Ephesians 2	Galatians 5
Philippians 2	Hebrews 3
Hebrews 13	James 2
1 Peter 2	