

1 Peter 2:1-10

Admonition To Be Living Members Of The Church

SUMMARY OF THE CONTENTS

This part of the letter is unmistakably a continuation of the first chapter. Peter again shows the believers the obligation they have because of their noble status as children of God. This also includes partaking of the brotherhood of Christ. As living stones in the spiritual House of God, they must glorify the virtues of God by their conscientious, godly walk. Here we must again pay attention to the background of the letter. The believers must demonstrate themselves to be the communion formed by the one, true Lord, Jesus Christ, in opposition to the godless unity of the world.

MAIN THOUGHTS

Two parts can be distinguished in this section: the first, an admonition to have a truly Christian walk (vv. 1-3); the second, the basic reason for such a walk being the great privilege which God's grace has granted to them (vv. 4-10).

NOTES ON THE TEXT

Verse 1

"Rid yourselves" refers to a garment that is taken off and laid aside. The wickedness against which Peter warns them is like a garment that hinders the believers. The five sins which are named here refer to their association with fellow believers, as well as their association with the world. At times something was missing in the believers' relationship with their brothers and sisters (cf. 1:22). The first sin (malice) points to a hostile disposition towards their neighbours. Malice is the source of the following iniquities which the apostle warns against: deceit, hypocrisy, insincerity [RSV], envy, and slander. Note the climax, the graduation of these sins: one gives birth to the next.

Verse 2

"Newborn" does not necessarily imply that these believers have only recently come to the Christian faith; it applies to all believers. Throughout their lives they must be filled with the longing mentioned here. In connection with 1:23, God's children are fed by the Word. They must be "pure", not mixed with false doctrine. Peter points out that not only that growth in grace and faith for every individual believer will occur, but also that the growth of all believers together, at the same time, results in the growth of the congregation (cf. v. 5).

Verse 3

"Tasted" refers back to being fed with the milk of the Word. In faith the believers experience that the Lord is merciful. The play on words contained in the original text is completely lost in the translation. It says that the Lord is "*chrestos*", and since here is meant that "the Lord" is Christ (as appears from v. 4: "come to him"), Peter really says: "Christ is *chrestos*" (literally: useful, kind, good). Peter alludes here to Psalm 34:8 where we read that the LORD is good. The apostle exchanges the name of the Covenant God for that of the Mediator (*Yahweh - Kurios*) — [see question 1](#).

Verse 4

It states in this verse "to whom coming", rather than "come to him". The Greek text indicates this coming as the way by which the believers must be built into a spiritual house. "Coming" here means giving oneself in faith to the Lord Jesus (cf. Isaiah 55:6; John 6:37; James 4:8).

"Living Stone" is an unnatural metaphor to man, but in the language of Scripture it is completely natural. The building of the Church rests on Christ as the foundation which gives it solidity and stability. This stone is living because he imparts life, but he can also crush to death. He was "rejected" as being unfit. Such an action is taken only after prior investigation, as the Greek implies, for this word is derived from a verb which means "to examine or investigate judicially" — [see question 2](#).

"Choice" [NASB] or "chosen" must not be contrasted to "rejected", but must be connected with "precious". The entire expression indicates God's sovereign judgment.

Verse 5

By coming to Christ, by having faith in him, a great wonder occurs. The believers themselves, as living stones, are built into a house. The RSV, using the imperative mood: "come..." and "be yourselves built..." (vv. 4 and 5), is less correct. "House" refers to a family dwelling. God wants to live with his people (cf. Exodus 29:43-46; 40:34-35; John 15:23; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Revelation 21:3) — [see question 3](#). A "spiritual house" is a house ruled and governed by the Spirit.

The "Priesthood" refers to a gathering, a group of priests. "Spiritual sacrifices" are sacrifices through the Spirit — [see question 4](#). The original text uses a word here for "offering" which is different from the usual one, namely, a word which means "to carry up" onto the altar, something that was to be done by the priests.

Verse 6

The part of Scripture referred to here is Isaiah 28:16. Paul quoted it in Romans 9:33 — [see question 5](#). Some exegetes are of the opinion that this "cornerstone" is a foundation stone. The Jews used stones of considerable dimensions (for the Temple it appears that stones which were used measured 6-7m. by 2-3m). However, others think that the cornerstone is the large stone above the entrance. In any case, the "cornerstone" is a stone on which the building rests and which supports it.

Verse 7

There are at least two translations of the first part of this verse: "this precious value" [NASB] and, "this stone is precious" [NIV]. The former is a better translation, for the word "he" does not appear in the original text. The text states "For you then, the believers, the value." A reference to Psalm 118:22 follows (cf. Isaiah 8:14; Matthew 21:42; Romans 9:32-33). Again, he was "rejected" as unfit. In some marble quarries blocks have been found which bear the letters REPR, an abbreviation of the Latin word *reprebatum* or "rejected as unfit".

Verse 8

The message of this verse is that one stumbles on the Word by being disobedient to it.

"Destined" or "appointed" [NASB] refers to God's ordainment — [see question 6](#).

Verse 9

The expressions used here concerning believers show them to be God's own people, his personal possession — see question 7. They are a "royal priesthood" (cf. Exodus 19:5,6), "holy", set apart, dedicated to God. They are a nation like all other nations (*ethnos*: from which is derived "ethnology", meaning a science that deals with the division of mankind into races and their origin, distribution, relations, and characteristics). Israel was God's chosen people which we find more often in the Scriptures, for example, Acts 15:14; Acts 26:23.

The "wonderful light" is a light which compels one to marvel in admiration.

Verse 10

There is an allusion to Hosea's prophecy about Israel, the covenant people, in this verse. (cf. Hosea 1:6, 9, 12; 2:22). To correctly understand the meaning of this verse, we must note that the Hebrew language has two words for "people". The Hebrew uses *goy*, or plural, *goyim*, (a word which the Jews still use when they speak contemptuously about non-Jewish people) and *am*, the word which we can find back in the above mentioned verses of Hosea 1 and 2: *Lo-Ammi* means "not my people". Peter says that before conversion believers were not God's own people, regardless of to which nation they belonged. In verse 10b we also find an allusion to Hosea 1 and 2: *Lo-Ruhamah* or "she has not obtained compassion"; *Ruhamah* or "she has obtained compassion" (cf. Hosea 1:6,12; 2:22) — see question 8.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read the definitions at the end of the chapter and discuss the differences between the words translated as "LORD" (*Yahweh*) and "LORD" (*Kurios*).
2. Was Christ "the Stone" rejected by the Jews (cf. Matthew 26:59-66; Acts 3:13-15; Acts 4:27-28)?
3. Is it clear from Exodus that the purpose of God's work of redemption (foreshadowed in the old dispensation), is God's dwelling with his people? (cf. Exodus 29:46; the word which is the motive for the whole book.)
4. What is the proper content of spiritual sacrifices according to verse 5 (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 32)?
5. Is Isaiah 28:16, quoted in verse 6, a direct prophecy concerning Christ?
6. Does the appointment of verse 8 remove the guilt of disobedience completely, or not (cf. Canons of Dort, I, 5; III/IV, 9; Matthew 13:10-17)?
7. How does Article 34 of the Belgic Confession express the nature of God's people in connection with Holy Baptism?
8. In verse 10 there is an allusion to Hosea's prophecy about Israel. Was Hosea required to demonstrate the meaning of *Lo-Ammi* and *Lo-Ruhamah* only by preaching or also by deeds? (See Hosea 1.)

YAHWEH (An Old Testament name of God)

God reveals himself as the God of grace by the name Yahweh, which gradually supplanted earlier names. It was always regarded as the most distinctive and the most sacred name of God, the incommunicable name. The Jews had a superstitious dread of using it since they read Leviticus 24:16 as follows: "He that names the name of YAHWEH shall surely be put to death." The meaning of this name is explained in Exodus 3:14 which is rendered "I am who I am", or "I shall be what I shall be." Thus interpreted, the name points to the unchangeableness of God. Yet it is not so much the unchangeableness of his essential Being that is in view as the unchangeableness of his relation to his people. The name contains the assurance that God will be for the people of Moses' day what he was for their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It stresses God's covenant faithfulness. It is his proper name par excellence (Exodus 15:3; Psalm 83:19; Hosea 12:6; Isaiah 42:8), and is therefore used for none but Israel's God.

KURIOS (A New Testament name for God)

The name Yahweh is explained several times by variations of a descriptive kind, such as "the Alpha and the Omega," "who is and who was and who is to come," "the Beginning and the End," and "the First and the Last" (Revelation 1:4,8,17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13). For the rest, however, the New Testament follows the Septuagint, which substituted *Adonai* for *Yahweh*, and rendered this by *Kurios*, derived from *Kuros*, power. This name does not have exactly the same connotation as *Yahweh*, but designates God as the Mighty One, the Lord, the Possessor, the Ruler who has legal power and authority. It is used not only for God, but also for Christ.

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