

God's big building project

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[0:00] It's a birthday, and so I thought, well, let's do a building quiz. Birthday parties have quizzes, they have games, and churches have buildings, don't they? So here we go.

! Anyone? Well, let's put it into a vote. What's the tallest building in the world? Is it A, the Burj Khalifa? Pop your hand up if you think that. Good few of you. Is it B, the Eiffel Tower? One or two. See the shards? You're absolutely right, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai. How small is the smallest house in the UK? Just think about it yourself. It's either in meters or feet and inches, depending on your age, depending if you've been here for 150 years or not. Here's the fact. 10 feet and 6 inches or 3.5 by 1.83 meters tall. It's the key house. It's in Wales. You can do your research if you want to go and see this small little red house. It's quite remarkable. I'm not sure I would fit in that. What's the biggest church building in the UK? Not the tallest church, but the biggest church building in the UK.

[1:20] St. Paul's Cathedral, A? A few people say that. B, Liverpool Cathedral? C, Salisbury Cathedral? This is dividing us.

The biggest church building in the UK is Liverpool Cathedral. Massive. Finally, and this is according to the Brighton Council website, so if you know otherwise, correct me later.

What year was this building built? Do you think it was 1876? A few. 1883? 1895?

Well, hopefully it's not that one because the church moved in here in 1894. It was 1876, apparently. Why all this talk about buildings?

Well, that's how the church is described in 1 Peter 2, verse 4, which we've just read. Do you have it open if you have closed your Bibles?

[2:25] Talk about God's big building project. As you come to him, chapter 2, verse 4, the living stone, rejected by humans, but chosen by God and precious to him, you also are like living stones being built into a spiritual house.

God's big building project is the church, and it's made up of living stones, which you'll see are people, and it's built around the living stone, which we'll see is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before we see that, just good to think very briefly about 1 Peter as a whole book. It's written to people. Chapter 1, verse 1, Peter writes as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he writes to God's elect exiles.

He writes to exiles, people who have been able to move away from home, persecuted for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, scattered around various parts of the world.

And he writes to them, and he says, though you may feel far away from home and family, you do belong somewhere. Though you may feel like you don't belong in this world, you do belong.

[3:38] You belong, you are secure in the Lord Jesus Christ, who's described in verse 3 as the one who's been resurrected from the dead and the one in whom we have new birth into a living hope.

It's marvelous. And then we get to this passage that we've read this morning in chapter 2, and Peter says, you belong to a home.

You belong to a building. You're part of it. This is the building you live in. Something much bigger than the Burj Khalifa. Something much more impressive than Liverpool Cathedral.

Something that will last much longer than the smallest house in the UK, or even this building we're in. You're part of God's big building project. And we see in the passage there are two key materials for God's big building project.

The first is this. It's the living stone. The living stone. Have a look at verse 4. As you come to him, the living stone.

[4:46] Capital S. Stone. The living stone. Not just a living stone. The living stone. There is only one. And so it's a special stone, isn't it?

This stone is unlike any other stone. It's been spoken about by God himself. It's been spoken about him by Isaiah.

In Isaiah chapter 28, which Peter quotes here. But if you want to just venture there briefly, back in the Old Testament, we can read those words for ourselves.

Isaiah chapter 28, verse 14. And if someone has a church Bible, it might be helpful just to shout out a page number.

710, if you're trying to find it. And we read this. Isaiah writes, So this is what the Lord says.

[6:07] It's all very bleak, isn't it? But the Lord says this. See, I lay a stone in Zion. A tested stone. A precious cornerstone. A sure foundation.

The one who relies on it will never be stricken and panic. We see in those verses that God is not giving up on his people. Although those two verses, 14 and 15, we've not got time to look at them. Are pretty bleak. They're about basically God's leaders have made dodgy deals with foreign lands, with enemies, particularly Assyrians at this time, to try and bring about peace and safety.

But really, they're bringing destruction on themselves. But God says, Don't worry, my people. There is a secure foundation which I have laid for you.

There is a stone, an important stone, a cornerstone, which is precious. You can belong to me and live securely in me as my people.

[7:15] A cornerstone is particularly special. I was doing some Googling about it. A cornerstone looks a bit like this. It's a very important stone in a building.

It sort of sets the whole building, all the other stones or bricks, in their right place. It's essential for a building, I believe.

But this, and this cornerstone, is particularly special because it's spoken of by God. What a special stone. It's spoken about elsewhere in the Bible.

Peter quotes them for us. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. That's in the Psalms. And again, in Isaiah.

A stone that causes people to stumble. And a rock that makes them fall. See, this stone isn't a very easy stone for some people to see and deal with, the Bible says.

[8:16] It is a stone that the world has not seen, unlike the world has ever seen before. And people look at it and think, that's a strange stone. We don't know what to do with that.

And it says people will fall over it. People reject it. It's what we read in verse 4, as you come to him, the living stone rejected by humans.

As in, it's such a strange stone. You can imagine a builder looking at it and thinking, well, this isn't any good for my building, is it? So I'll just pop it in the bin. No goods.

Rubbish. A rubbish stone. What is this stone? Or who is this stone? It's a living stone.

And we're thinking about a who. Well, rejected by humans, chosen by God and precious to him. We believe this is the Lord Jesus Christ this is talking about. Rejected by humans.

[9:18] People stood and said of the Lord Jesus, crucify him, crucify him. We don't want him as our king. We have no king but Caesar. They put him in the bin.

They didn't want to deal with him. They put him to death. And yet this passage says, for some, we see how special he is.

Verse 5, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house. You have come to believe that this stone is precious.

Verse 7 says. See, in Jesus, this precious cornerstone who was put to death by others, we can actually find a very precious savior.

We can find someone who has been obedient to his father's plan to bring eternal life for his people. To bring eternal security that Isaiah spoke about, about this stone, for his people.

[10:26] In the Lord Jesus, we can find someone who has been obedient to him. And find someone in whom will give us a sure hope and foundation for living our life.

Peter speaks about it. Chapter 1, verse 3. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he's given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And into inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. In other words, some of us have come to see this stone is not for the big.

This stone is precious and actually integral for living. And so we place him front and center as the cornerstone of the building that God is building in this world, the church.

And I think that would have been a great encouragement if you're reading this letter. One of the first readers reading this letter. People who are far away from home.

[11:32] People who are far away from home because they were following Jesus. Peter says, don't worry. It's okay. Jesus is a precious stone.

He is a living, resurrected savior. And you do find your security living your life in him. Those people who we've spoken about from 150 years ago or over the last 150 years.

Who have become part of Brighton Railway Mission and Calvary Church. They have found a precious cornerstone. A precious savior in the Lord Jesus Christ.

One they can build their lives upon. And as part of this local church, I'm sure I've realized they're part of something far, far bigger that God is building in this world.

Throughout history and even today. The church. People connected to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so it's great, isn't it, to hear that for 150 years people have been meeting here and at Brighton Station proclaiming life in Jesus.

[12:49] This cornerstone. He's the essential, vital, living stone that holds this church together and has continued to do so for 150 years.

Absolutely remarkable. Two essential building materials for this building. The living stone, the Lord Jesus, and secondly, the living stones.

Jesus is the living stone who sets the whole building in place. And look at who the living stones are. The rest of the building is. Verse 5.

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house. In Jesus, all who trust in Jesus, we find we are part of this building, the church.

The church is a building. It's described here as a building. Not like this building. Not with physical bricks and stones. But it's made up of the people that we see around us.

[14:00] Made up of individual people who've found their life in the Lord Jesus. So if you're a Christian this morning, you are part of God's big, worldwide, history-wide building project.

And it's not unusual, is it, that God does his work in buildings. In the Old Testament, we see different structures built for the worship of the Lord, don't we?

There was firstly the tabernacle, a roving tent which his people had as a place to come and worship God. And then was built a temple by Solomon.

It was a grand temple you can read about in the Old Testament. A building built to allow people to come near. To the living God and worship him.

And in that temple, you would see workers, priests, who had the role of offering sacrifices to the Lord on behalf of the people.

[15:08] But in this new building that God is building in the Lord Jesus Christ, There is no need for a physical place. And there is no need for certain people to be priests.

We are all connected as bricks to the Lord Jesus. We can all come freely to him wherever we are. At any time and in any place.

Don't need to come to a special building. Don't need to come to a grand cathedral. You can simply come to God wherever you find yourself. And speak to him freely.

Tell him your dreams. Tell him your plans. Tell him your concerns about yourself and others. Ask him for forgiveness for your sins. And he will hear you if you're joined to the Lord Jesus Christ, the living stone.

As throughout the last 150 years of Calvary Brighton and Brighton Railway Mission, we've heard about where we've met. It's not always been in a physical church building.

[16:15] It's been at Brighton Station. And I'm sure Elizabeth Gates, as she was starting the work here, didn't just pray at Brighton Station where the railway workers met for Bible studies.

I'm sure she prayed everywhere at home on the train as she walked because she was someone connected to the living stone. And so too can we today.

But it is a special thing to be able to gather with other living stones, other people who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. In a place like this on a Sunday, on a Wednesday, at other times.

But if we met at the Costa down the road, or if we met at Preston Park, or if we met by the beach, we'd still be able to do the things we're doing here today. Still be able to speak to God.

We'd still be able to read his words. Still be able to sing together. But we do praise God for the provision of this building to call our home together.

[17:19] Praise God for those who've given sacrificially to enable us as Calvary Church to own this building for ourselves. Praise God for the base that it gives us.

We're thankful for the building, but the church is not this building. It's us. There's a risk that in this sermon, you're thinking, this is all well and good, but apparently I'm just a stone.

I'm just an inanimate object. And we don't want to feel like that because that's not right. We are living stones. We are alive.

And Peter wants to point out the very special identity that we have as living stones. It's there in verses 9 to 10. The first thing is, Peter says, we're chosen.

We're chosen. Which is a wonderful thing to be told. I remember at school, sometimes in PE lessons, people would have to choose who would be on their team.

[18:25] And I would stand there feeling like a wally because I was never going to be pit first. I was often pit towards the last. And I felt like, yeah, of course people don't want me on their team.

I don't want to be on their team for their sake. But what an amazing thing it is to be thought of and chosen by God.

By God who's made this whole world. Who rules over all history. Who sees and knows everyone who has ever lived. And who surely does not make mistakes as the sovereign ruler of all.

He has chosen you to be his. Part of his big building project. Not because you're the last choice. Not because he ran out of options.

But simply because he has genuine, intentional love for you and wanted you to be part of his people. Not a humbling thing.

[19:27] God loves you. He's chosen you. And he's made us to be a royal priesthood and a holy nation. What distinguished words are given to us, his people.

Royal priests. We heard about priests in the temple and tabernacle. Where God's people in the Old Testament used to meet. They had to be very certain people.

Certain men from a certain family. And only one man, one time a year, the great high priest could go directly into God's holy of holies. God's special presence.

But now we're described all as priests if we're connected to Jesus. Jesus. What a wonderful thing. And that's because the Lord Jesus Christ has made the final sacrifice for sins as the great high priest.

And we're connected to him and he sets us apart as holy in his sight. And so all of us have access to him very freely. Whether we're male or female, boy or girl, all because we trust in Jesus, the living cornerstone.

[20:44] And we're also described as God's special possession. We belong to God's. If you feel like you don't belong. If you feel like you're trying to work out your identity.

What a greater thing than coming to know life in the Lord Jesus and knowing that you yourself belong to the living God.

What greater thing? What greater privilege there is there than that? Perhaps you're here this morning because you're wondering about your identity.

Perhaps you're wanting a place to belong. Wanting to be part of something bigger than yourself. God says if you trust in Jesus who has paid for all your sin.

You can come to him and belong. Be part of his big building project that he's doing in the world today. And in Jesus.

[21:51] Coming to Jesus. It's like he picks us up and says you're a living stone. You're alive in me. You're chosen by me. You're a royal priest.

You can come freely to me and you're set apart as holy. What a wonderful thing. To be part of. If you've got any questions about that.

Please do ask people here who are following the Lord Jesus. We'd love to tell you more. So this is the identity of our church.

It has been for 150 years. And it will be for however long God chooses to keep this church full. And what do we do?

What do we do with who God has made us to be? Verse 9. He's made it. We are these things because we must declare the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.

[22:54] That's what we do as a church. We meet here Sunday by Sunday. Wednesday after Wednesday and other times declaring the praises of the one who has brought us out of darkness.

Out of our sin and shame to be in the wonderful light of the Lord Jesus, the precious cornerstone. We praise him because he has had great mercy on us who do not deserve any mercy.

And as we sing his praises, as we declare his praises to one another and to the world around us, it might just be that some who are currently rejecting Jesus, sort of put him in the bin, said, no, don't know what to do with him.

They might see us. They might hear what we're saying and singing and think, oh, maybe there is something in this Lord Jesus. And so that's what we need to continue to do for however long God would give Calvary Church or until Jesus comes back.

We must declare his praises, the God who saves. That's the church. And Phil.

[24:11] Phil. Phil. Thank you.