

New Family

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Date: 10 March 2024

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[0 : 00] It took over 2,000 years to complete. From the 3rd century BC to the 17th century AD, with a total length of about 21,200 kilometers.

At completion, it became the world's largest military structure. It was inscribed into the World Heritage List in 1987 as a property of cultural significance and outstanding universal value.

The Great Wall of China is one of the most incredible constructions and most impressive architectural features of human history. The construction was not a single long project from start to finish, but more like restoration of joining of different fortifications over time.

It was done for the protection of the people and to provide better control of its country by different emperors. The Great Wall was constructed for defense and to provide a trade route along the Silk Road at a great financial and human cost.

With up to several million people involved in the entire construction, and close to a million died while working according to unofficial records.

[1 : 20] Today, we marvel at and praise such a great structure, even though when it was built, it was not for praise and wonder. The various emperors were not thinking about how people would marvel at their finished product.

They were more concerned about the immediate needs of the emperor. In today's passage, Peter employs a fair bit of building terms and also talks about a building project.

As we have participated in this building project, we are called by Peter to focus on how we may eventually declare the praises of Jesus, who called us to become part of God's divine family.

Three points for today are the call to new family, the ethic of the new family, and the power of the new family. And you can find this outline in our simple app.

Reading through 1 Peter 2, 1 to 10, especially verses 4 to 8, Peter says, We cannot but agree that stone and rocks are the prominent features of this passage.

[2 : 28] As you come to him, the living stone, rejected by humans, but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Peter says, Peter says, People who come to Jesus and put their faith in him are like newborn babies being built into a spiritual household. First line says that, As people come to Jesus, they will become a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a royal nation, a holy nation, God's special possession, so they may declare the praises of him who call people out of darkness into God's wonderful light.

The term chosen people and a holy nation denote that the new family that Jesus called his followers to become is not the typical, natural, common, two parents and siblings kind of new kid family, but a new race, a new citizenship under a new king, a family that is connected with the divine family as God's nation.

We are not being called to join another migration rush to adopt a citizenship of another country on earth, like what my family did more than 35 years ago moving from Hong Kong to Australia.

My dad bought a business in the house and our family stayed for a couple of years and we were eligible to have an interview. There were no citizenship tests back then, but just a general chat.

[4 : 04] And I remember we were asked whether we know how to sing in French or French or French or make sure we learn it before the ceremony. And after all the boxes are ticked, we went to the Han Hall and be sworn in as citizens.

Quickly after that, we were told and found out about all the benefits and social welfare we were entitled to or eligible to apply. I and other two siblings were only able to get all studied because our family is a business migrant.

And we didn't get much out of the welfare system. But from my observation over the years, many people come to church, the family of God, with a similar mentality.

They get involved with church mainly for what they can get out of it. People come looking for relationships, for support, for all the welfare the church is handing out.

These are not bad things in and of itself. We all need friendship and support. And Jesus said and promised in Matthew 11, Come to me, all who you are weary and burdened.

[5 : 07] I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart. And you will find rest for your soul. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

However, God's church is not a recharging station. So people can come and get charged up and keep going without taking Jesus into their life.

Sadly, so many Christians will focus on telling people how they can get their needs met at church without telling them about Jesus or about their own relationship with Jesus.

People leave a church because they feel that their needs are no longer at the top of the priority list of the church. The new family that Jesus calls his disciples to become is not of this world.

His disciples are built into a spiritual house to become a royal and holy priesthood that offers spiritual sacrifice to the sovereign God who created everything in this world.

[6 : 08] We are called to see beyond what is happening around us. While we engage with our immediate physical world to something spiritual and far greater. What God is building, if it is physical structure, will leave the Great Wall of China like a mini-nation.

What God is building is monumental. It is incredible because God is great and awesome. His greatness is beyond any human imagination.

God builds his people to become his special, chosen, precious possession. Because they are built on Jesus Christ, the precious cornerstone that humans rejected but chosen by God.

Before people came to come to Jesus to put their faith and trust in him, we are all like stones scattered about in the paddock. We lay about causing nuisance to those who are working on the field.

Try mowing a lawn full of rocks and you know what I mean. People think of or hope themselves to be one big giant rock like the great natural beauty and significant like S rock in Aguru.

[7 : 19] However, people as individual rocks only take up space that grass is supposed to grow for the feeding of the livestock. They trip over others who are unaware of their whereabouts physically and especially spiritually.

By ourselves as individual rock, we can do nothing good. Even though not many of us are willing to admit that status of our life. Everyone will try to build meaning in their life, have some achievement and live some legacy.

At every stage of our life, no matter whether you are at school or about to leave university, or you have been in a job for a few years or just starting a family, or you have just become an empty nester or approaching retirement, we all hope to make something of our lives to add meaning and value.

However, if we are honest with ourselves, we all have to accept that nothing built by humans will last forever. Every human project requires constant maintenance and repair to keep them from crumbling down.

God gathered us up from the paddock and built us on top of Jesus, the living stone, rejected by humans but chosen and precious to him. Individual stones are built into a spiritual house, taking up the nature of Jesus, the chosen and precious cornerstone.

[8 : 43] Together, we become living stone. We become royal, precious and holy. We become useful and fit for purpose because Jesus is the cornerstone that God set in place and built us upon.

The cornerstone Jesus that God builds his people on determines the nature and uprightness of the building. Jesus is one essential stone on which the integrity of the building depends.

He determines the ethics of the new family. Verse 6-8 says, See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious stone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.

The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Your trust in Jesus and your faith in him will determine whether you live in honor or be put to shame.

The stone the truth is that important. It's more important than your academic or career achievement or how well your kids do at school if you have kids. Your connection with Jesus is and should be the most important element of your life.

[9 : 59] Paul also tells us in Ephesians 2, verse 19-22, that God's people are fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his 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 raised to become a holy temple to the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Jesus is the one who joins all stone together, so the whole building grows into a holy temple in the Lord. And all the stones are built up together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

If you are a Christian, a follower of Christ, a disciple, that is who you are. Being a disciple is a process of being built into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Christians live as one of the stones God is putting in his new structure that he is building. And as part of this holy structure, holy spiritual structure that God is building, how would you describe your situation and experience?

[11 : 13] Stones of many different shapes and types will surround you. There will be other stones around you in every dimension.

There will be others above you, underneath you, in front of you, at the back of you, on the side of you. There are stones all around you. Stones by nature have many rough edges.

The reality is, your rough edges will cause as much discomfort to others as they are causing you. God, as a builder, will definitely have his very good reason for you and others why he placed you where you are with whoever is around you.

We live in a society that puts so much emphasis on personal comfort and individual space. And Christians are not immune from the influence of our society.

Many Christians move from one church to another until they find one that is comfortable and shoot their shopping list of what they want a church to be. They check out what programs are there for the kids, what social group they have during the week, what age group or life stage the members are attending.

[12 : 25] So many people come to church with a view of treating relationships at the church as transnational exchanges. They will only contribute to building relationships if they will get their needs fulfilled.

When it comes to making friends and building relationships, they filter out any people that might make them uncomfortable, or those that they consider not in the same class as them.

People with this mentality tend to move on once they consider that the church they have been going to cannot adequately meet their needs. And what would happen is some of the stones in the structure decide to take themselves out of their place.

All the stones surrounding that individual stone would be affected. We cannot stretch enough of the importance of you as a disciple to be in community with other followers of God.

All believers of Jesus need a gospel community to keep us accountable to God and each other, to help us rip ourselves of all the fights that Peter had listed in verse 1 and others.

[13 : 33] All malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander have one thing in common. They all need to harm towards others.

Jesus prayed in John 17 for people who have come to believe in him through the message of his disciples to be one, just as the Father is in him and he is in the Father.

He also prays for his followers to be in the divine union of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, so that the world may believe that God has sent him and be brought into complete unity, sharing the glory that the Father has given the Son.

The ethics of the new family is to love one another deeply with a sincere love for each other, like how Jesus loved the Father and this world.

Jesus obeys everything that the Father requires of him, even to death on the cross, because he loves the Father and the Father loves him. Peter repeatedly reminds us in his readers of who they are.

[14 : 39] We have tasted that the Lord is good in verse 3. We have been built into a spiritual house to be a holy priest, offering spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God through Jesus Christ in verse 5.

And we are all believers in verse 7. We are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that we might declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into this wonderful light in verse 9.

And we all have received mercy, and you are now the people of God. In verse 10. He urges his reader to live such good lives among the pagan in verse 11 and 12 that, though they accuse them of doing wrong, they may see their good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

His readers face rejection and mockery from pagans, and so are Jesus' disciples in the modern day. If you tell other people you are a follower of Christ or a Christian, you will be rejected by people like Jesus was rejected.

You may even be falsely accused, but Jesus' disciples are to keep living our good life among others to bring glory to God. How is that possible?

[15 : 59] Peter repeats in this passage twice the fact that the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. And he quotes a command from the Old Testament in verse 6. The command for us is to see, to behold what God has done and is doing with the chosen and precious cornerstone.

And before commanding us to see, Peter also commanded us to crave, to long for pure spiritual milk like newborn babies. Rejection and trials are to be expected when you put your trust, when you entrust your life with Jesus, because he was rejected to by people that he is saving.

He was rejected to guarantee your acceptance by the Father. God's people are commanded and urged to keep looking at what God has done through Jesus, and not the hardship they are facing.

When Paul was writing to the Corinthian church, and the writer of the Hebrews both referred to the teaching of God's word as milk. The word of God, the Bible, the spiritual milk is a fruit that nourishes our spirit and sustains us through all the trials and rejections.

It is in God's word that we get to see and be reminded of the great work God is doing to save his disciples. The power of the new family comes from our connection to the precious cornerstone, the Lord Jesus.

[17 : 40] The spiritual milk is a Bible. That is why getting into a habit of reading the Bible four or more times a week is crucial for your faith to grow. Only in the Bible do we learn and understand how God choose individual stones for his building project.

God's word is what connects us to his precious son, so we are holy and precious too. The reason we keep encouraging and urging our members to join a gospel community is to get into a rhythm or habit of spending time in God's word daily, so to be connected and held accountable for your good.

Because we need you and you need us as part of God's building. If you are a Christian, you are being built into something far greater than the Great Wall of China, of monumental significance.

It's like many Uluru and Ashok join together. There will always be other stones surrounding you. Your rough edges are causing as much discomfort to them as they are causing you.

You are to share your discomfort and that should not be your reason for plucking yourself out of God's Great Building Project. People who do not have God in their lives will dislike you and reject you because they would rather stay in darkness and not come into God's light.

[19 : 01] You are part of God's spiritual house and we are all interconnected, interdependent and intimately linked to other disciples. If you think differently, you have misunderstood what you are called into.

You are unsettling the world. If you have not put your trust in Jesus and you are working very hard to try to keep what you are building together. You are not certain what will climb on it that will break it and crumble it down.

You worry about how long your effort will last. Jesus talks about our attitude and action towards his teaching and the result it will lead to in Matthew 7, verse 24 to 27.

Jesus says, Jesus says, God has a living stone that was rejected by humans, but chosen by God and precious to him.

For in scripture it says, See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone. The one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.

[20 : 53] God's new family is far greater and will never fall because God is building it on Jesus.