

TITLE: A Royal Priesthood (Part 4)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 2:6

THEME: The Believer's Priesthood

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Read Passage

One of the most profound instances in Scripture is recorded in Matthew chapter 27

Jesus is being crucified. He is nailed to t/cross at 12 noon on Friday. The area experiences a total eclipse of t/sun for three hours (recorded in history). It's t/middle of t/day & it's dark (judgement). 3 hours later, J. cries out w/a loud voice in Aramaic, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" ("My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" - Psalm 22:1). It's recorded that Jesus cried out again with a loud voice (don't know what - perhaps in anguish/pain) and gave up His spirit. He died, our sins pinned to him.

And then, as Matthew records it in verse 51==>

And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook; and the rocks were split.

That's profound!

Remember t/Temple (Herod's Temple) had an inner sanctum; it was called t/Holy of Holies, or The Most Holy Place. It symbolized t/presence of Holy God. Only t/H.P. could enter there—only after making extreme measures in guarding his own purity lest he be killed for his sin. This he did 1x per yr. to atone for sin of Israel.

That most holy place was separated from t/rest of t/Temple by a thick, heavy veil. The veil represented t/barrier that exists between God & sinful men (Isaiah 59:2 - "*your sin has made a separation between you and God*").

Ancient Jewish Historian Josephus records that t/veil (veils - apparently several of them were tied together) totaled t/thickness of a palm (about 4"). They were approx. 60 ft. tall & so heavy that 300 priests were needed to manipulate each one. It was said that a team of horses pulling on each side could not tear them apart.

Yet, v. 51 **And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom . . .**

That which a team of horses could not do, God did. That it was torn from top to bottom (rather than t/other way around) indicates that it was torn from heaven, not from earth.

What was the significance?

Symbolized in dramatic fashion that t/sacrifice of JC was a sufficient & final payment for sin. T/Holy of Holies was now open for everyone, Jew & Gentile alike.

In a sense t/veil also symbolized X himself. He is t/veil that was rent, torn apart, as God poured out his wrath upon Him. He is t/curtain that was parted, allowing us access to God through Him. We walk through t/open veil that is X!

Some 40 yrs. later, just as Jesus predicted in Luke 13:35, t/Romans attacked Jerusalem & destroyed t/Temple. You see, God was never again to dwell in a temple made w/human hands (Acts 17:24).

What do you do with an old, obsolete building? Tear it down. The wrecking ball that God used was t/Empire of Rome.

In fact, Heb. 9:8-9 declares that t/Temple was indicative of t/old age. A New Covt. has arrived making t/old one obsolete.

God no longer dwells in temples of stone, but in t/spiritual temple which is t/CH. You are individual stones that make up that temple. X is t/C.S.

* That's t/key verse of this passage {read v. 5}

"The priesthood of the believer is the privilege won for every Christian by Christ giving the believer access to God in prayer, confession, sacrifice and Word."

We have that access because JC (our veil) has been torn asunder opening t/way to God, making us individual priests in t/ image of our Great H.P.

I. The Church as a Royal Priesthood (2:4-10)

A. Established in the Living Stone (4) *This is the Source of our Priesthood*

And coming to Him as the Living Stone, having been rejected by men—but chosen by God and precious [to Him].

The source of our P.H. as believers in t/L.S. of t/CH. The one rejected by men, but chosen by God – and precious to Him.

B. Erected as a Spiritual Temple (5): *This is the Structure of our Priesthood*

You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1. The Nature of the Temple: We are Living Stones

2. The Paradox of the Temple: We are both a Spiritual House and a Holy Priesthood

3. The Service of the Temple: We are to offer Spiritual Sacrifices

Third major point {restate 1st two} ==>

C. Elected as the People of God (6-10) *This is the Security of our Priesthood*

I don't want be like t/guy voted most humble in his CH. They gave him a pin as an award. When he won it, they took it away from him.

But - I'm proud of this particular outline. Process as close to giving birth as I'll ever know. I will at times labor hours working at an outline & main idea for a given text. Some of them aren't the greatest. I feel pretty good about this one.

Here are sub-points that will take us thru rest of this passage - all under the heading of {restate C} ==>

1. The Cornerstone of Our Belief (6a)
2. The Confidence of Our Belief (6b)
3. The Contrast of Unbelief (7)
4. The Cause of Unbelief (8)
5. The Character of God's People (9a)
6. The Commission of God's People (9b)
7. The Calling of God's People (9c)

1. The Cornerstone of Our Belief (6a)

For it is contained in Scripture: BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOSEN STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE . . .

a. Peter is giving OT support for vv. 4-5

Why he begins v. 6 w/coordinating conjunction διότι (because, therefore, for). Rem. we are a royal P.H. We're Est. in t/L.S. (v. 4) // Erected as a S.T. (v. 5). Here's what t/O.T. said about that.

... it is contained ...

Word used in ancient lit. of the contents of a will. But we're not talking about a will, we're talking about what?

... it is contained [where?] ...

(1) In Scripture - ἐν γραφῇ (Eng. "graph" "graphite")

In t/NT word was a technical term used some 56x to indicate that they are quoting from t/O.T. Never used to intro. extra-biblical writings or t/Apocrypha.

... it is contained (or "written") in Scripture (quote from Isa. 28:16):
BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOSEN STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE ...

(a) Quote doesn't exactly match either the Heb. or Gk. OT

Not really sure why this is. Perhaps Peter (& Paul who also quotes this passage in Rom. 9:33) used a common source such as a testimony book - a collection of messianic prophecies. It's not an exact quote, it's more of a paraphrase. Of course, Peter has apostolic privilege to "tweak" the quote, if you will. He's writing under inspiration.

(b) Context of the quote

Prophet Isa. is proclaiming a message of judgement on Israel for their disobedience & unbelief. Nation of Assyria is going to be used by God to punish them (Assyria that conquered Israel in 722 BC).

Right in t/middle of that chapter on judgement comes this prophetic statement ==>

Isaiah 28:16 ... "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.

IOW - Yeah, it's bad news. I'm going to judge t/nation for their wickedness. But there's hope for t/righteous remnant. If you believe you will not be disturbed; "I will sustain you."

i. Ultimately, of course, the promise is Messianic just as verse 8 is also

This particular verse from Isa. 28 is quoted several times in t/NT. Quoted, in whole or in part, by Paul in Rom. 9:33, 10:11, & Eph. 2:20. Of course, again by Peter here.

Each time that it's quoted it refers to Whom? Who is t/Cornerstone? Who is it that grants confidence to those who believe in Him?

1. He is the Cornerstone of Our Belief (6a)

For it is contained in Scripture: BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOSEN STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE . . .

b. Word "Cornerstone" only used here and Eph. 2:20

NIV's "capstone" is a bad transl. (don't stumble over a capstone). Architectural word that specifically refers to a/"chief cornerstone." Describes 1st stone laid down in building a structure. Was t/stone that est. all t/proper angles for t/rest of t/building. Like t/building's plumb line.

Was t/most important stone in the entire building. Had to be geometrically perfect itself. It then had to be laid perfectly. Had to be level, plum, true. Every other stone that comprised t/building had to be aligned according to this one essential stone. So critical was t/placement of this stone that no one but a master builder could lay it. What a picture!

(1) At least Three Implications

(a) First - We have JC as our Chief Stone, our Cornerstone

As such, He is perfect, flawless, true.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Heb. 7:26 For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens.

Not only that, but as t/Cornerstone, He was laid down perfectly by t/Father. God is that master builder. It was his good pleasure to bring X forth into history at t/appt. time to redeem a people for Himself (Gal. 4:4)..

(b) Second - We as the building stones are placed where we are for a reason

Rem. in ancient architecture, all t/building stones had to be aligned according to t/Cornerstone. Couldn't just lay a stone anywhere.

Like a puzzle. I hate puzzles. Not patient enough. I want to take ones that are close and jam-em' into places they're not supposed to go. I guess I would have made a terrible stone mason.

God doesn't have that problem. He's great at puzzles. He designed them! As far as t/puzzle which is you, t/spiritual building of God, He placed you right where t/Cornerstone dictated you should be. You were chosen & placed right where God wanted you. Rest in that. Don't try to change what God has designed. That's our 3rd point.

(c) We as living stones must stay aligned with the Cornerstone

Biblical, Genuine Xnty isn't B.K. ("have it your way"). Our theme song isn't Frank Sinatra's "I did it my way."

We all must line up w/the Cornerstone. As God's spiritual temple, we must adhere & conform to t/Cornerstone, JC. He alone is t/single standard

of measurement. This is relevant for our Doctrine & our Duty. Our Doctrine (what we believe must line up w/Him). Duty (our lives). What we've seen so far in 1 Peter. Chapt. 1 {cite vv. 13-15, 17b, 22}; Chapt. 2 {cite vv. 1-2} Our lives need to be aligned w/His.

Who is ==>

1. The Cornerstone of Our Belief (6a)

Who is t/Head of t/CH? Who is t/foundation stone?

Somewhat ironic that it's Peter who so clearly asserts this. After all, it was Peter that Jesus spoke to in Matthew 16 telling him in response to his great confession that Jesus was the Christ ==>

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.

Great Question of Xn history as been, "What or Who is t/Rock?" What is t/foundation? Is it Peter? Rome would say "Yes, Peter was the first Pope in a succession of Popes, and each Pope is Head of t/CH."

The Reformers said "No, it is X alone who is head of t/CH."

That whole movt. for reform almost stalled. It did so until God worked in such a providential way.

We're going to go back in time to the 16th c. (1519 to be exact)

One of t/key turning points in t/reformation of t/CH was The Leipsic Disputation (debate) of 1519.

By t/beg. of 1519 things seemed to have come to a halt as far as influence of Martin Luther upon t/CH was concerned. God ironically used a man full of himself & selfish ambition to reignite the fires of spiritual revival.

Man's name was Dr. John Eck, Professor of theology at Ingolstadt. Eck was once Luther's friend. But he had changed. Eck was now bent on making a name for himself, and he was doing this by engaging in, & winning theological debates.

Up until this time, no one was able to silence Martin Luther. Many had tried, but found him too knowledgeable. So, John Eck thought that there could be no better notch in his gun than one in the shape of an "L". If he could get Luther to debate him, and if he won (he was certain he would) then everyone would know about John Eck. He would be celebrated by t/Roman CH as one of her biggest heroes.

So a debate (they were called disputations then) was scheduled in Leipsic Germany, which hosted a major theological university.

Main subject of t/debate was to be papal authority. IOW - Eck was to defend t/CH's teaching that t/Apost. Pet. was 1st Pope in Rome & what followed was an unbroken chain of Apostolic authority centered in Rome.

Luther, accompanied by his dear friend & fellow theologian, Philip Melancthon, arrived in Leipsic in June. Eck arrived a few days prior.

This is really a big event. Politicians are there, Duke George of Saxony was there. The Duke of Pomerania was there. There were noblemen, knights, and theologians. Lots of pomp and circumstance.

Fortunately, we have first-hand descriptions of some of these men. 16th c. was before television (I know that's hard for some of you to imagine, life w/o TV). Was no Fox News. No Photographs. No telephones. No recording devices, internet or computers.

Peter Mosellanus (Greek professor at Leipsic) as an eye-witness, writes for us what his perceptions were.

He portrays Luther as being avg. in height, painfully thin, with a sonorous voice. He is described as being in prime of life, possessing an unparalleled knowledge of Scripture; “he has the Word of God at his fingers’ ends.” He is “pleasing and affable . . . there is nothing harsh or austere about him . . . he displays firmness and has always a cheerful air.”

As for Luther's opponent, John Eck, he is described as being tall & broad-shouldered. He has a strong voice & a rugged appearance. His memory is excellent, but he is prone to sophistry.

What's "sophistry?" Mosellanus gives a good description of t/sophistry of John Eck ==>

“Hence, in [debating], he heaps together, without selection or discernment, a mass of passages from the Bible, quotations from the Fathers, and proofs of all kinds. . . . If he is embarrassed, he breaks off from the subject he is treating of, and plunges into another; he sometimes even takes up his adversary’s opinion, clothing it in other words, and with extraordinary skill attributes to his opponent the absurdity he had been himself defending.” [page 167]

IOW - he cloaks his points w/lots of words & deceptive arguments.

The disputation was to last 20 days. Factions are forming (those who were supporters of Luther & reformation against t/majority who supported Eck & Rome). Leipsic is buzzing.

Meanwhile, the Duke of Pomerania asks Luther to preach in his chapel. Luther was more than happy to do so. He preaches a sermon focused squarely on t/Gospel, God's grace given to undeserving sinners solely on t/merits of X by faith.

John Eck wasn't there, but some of his friends were & they reported to him about what Luther taught. Eck saw this as a wonderful opportunity.

The city was partial to him & he had free reign to go from CH to CH, preaching against Luther. When Luther tried to gain a hearing for rebuttal, t/CHs turned him down.

Rumors began to spread against him. One such story claimed that Luther carried a little devil with him, kept hidden away in a box. When Eck heard this, he said:

“I don’t know if the devil is in the box or merely under his frock,” but he is certainly in one or the other.”

The day comes & Luther & Eck began their debate on July 4 at 7:00 AM. Eck contends that t/CH must have a head on earth who is none other than t/Pope. He argues that w/o such a head t/CH would be splintered into numerous schisms. In defending an unbroken papal succession going back to Peter, Eck quotes t/early CH Fathers, namely St. Jerome.

Round One is half over. Those who had heard Eck were in awe. Certainly, Luther was finished.

But as impressive as was Eck in his knowledge, Luther was leagues beyond him. He counters w/volumes of quotes from t/CH Fathers. He cites t/Council of Africa. He quotes Augustine.

But it's to t/Bible that Luther makes his final appeal & strongest appeal. He quotes our very passage, 1 Peter 2:6 {read}

To top it off, Luther quotes Augustine & Ambrose who both declared (in Latin) - *Super isto articulo fidei, fundata est Ecclesia* (the CH is founded on this very article of faith, namely JC is the Chief Cornerstone).

The debate on papal authority lasted five days. Luther clung to the sole authority of Scripture.

“The Christian believer acknowledges no other authority than Holy Scripture. This alone is the divine right.” He accused Eck of having “skimmed over Scripture almost without touching it—as a spider runs upon the water,” and of “[fleeing] from the Scriptures as the devil from before the cross.”

20 days had passed. As was to be expected, each side claimed victory.

Mosellanus (who as far as I can tell went into t/debate as a neutral observer) put it all in perspective ==>

“Eck is conqueror in the eyes of those who do not understand the matter, and who have grown gray under the old schoolmen. But Luther . . . [is] victorious in the opinion of those who possess any learning, understanding, and modesty.”

The real proof lies in t/lives that were changed during those twenty days. John Eck’s secretary & friend, Poliander, was won to t/Reformation & later began to preach t/Gospel. John Cellarius, professor of Heb. at Leipsic & an outspoken critic of Luther began to search t/Bible & was also won over. He retired from his position and moved to Wittenberg to study under Luther. 12 yr old Prince George of Anhalt was converted & later became a key figure in t/Reformation. Many students were changed & as a result enrollment at Wittenberg nearly doubled. One of those students, Gaspard Cruciger, later became Luther’s assistant in his translation of t/Bible into German.

The Gospel, t/truth, will always win in the end. Sometimes there's a cost involved. As Luther later wrote to his friend Spalatin ==>

“the Gospel cannot be defended without tumult and without scandal. The Word of God is a sword,—a war,—a ruin,—a stumbling block,—a destruction,—a poison; and as Amos says, it meets us like a bear in the road or a lioness in the forest.”

Again, to bring it back to 1 Peter ==>

1. Jesus Christ is the Cornerstone of Our Belief (6a)

He is t/Living Head of t/CH. He takes no rivals in that regard & will tolerate none.

For it is contained in Scripture: BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOSEN STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE . . .

c. Note again we see that He is chosen and precious

Rem. we saw t/same thing in v. 4 {cite}. As t/L.S. He is "choice" & He is "precious" in t/sight of God. As t/L.S. He is also a "chosen" stone & a "precious" cornerstone. Same two words are used here in v. 6 that are used in v. 4.

d. Let me ask you another question?

"Where is this stone placed?"

. . . BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOSEN STONE . . .

(1) Is that significant?

(a) What is meant by "Zion?"

Word can be used in t/general sense of t/city of Jerusalem // used of a specific section of Jerusalem (SE hill, MT. Zion) // The Temple Mount (which was MT. Moriah, not MT Zion, but Zion became synonymous w/Temple MT.).

As one writer observes ==>

" . . . the Temple Mount area immediately to the north, which was first constructed under Solomon's reign, may also bear the name [Zion]. This seems implied from a number of Psalms extolling the virtues of Zion and from related themes elsewhere in the OT. Zion is 'my [God's] holy hill' (Ps. 2:6), 'the holy habitation of the Most High (Ps. 46:4); it is 'Mount Zion, which he loves,' where God 'built his sanctuary like the high heavens' (Ps. 78:68-69)." [Harper's Bible Dictionary, J.A.D.]

Sometimes it encompasses Jerusalem w/an eye toward t/Temple & its observances & sacrifices.

Zion is to the New Covenant what Sinai was to the Old. As Sinai represents the judgement of the law, Zion represents the blessings of grace.

i. Turn to Hebrews chapter 12 (vv. 18-23)

This chapt. draws a contrast between t/Old Covt. & t/New. The old was assoc. w/Moses & w/Mt. Sinai (where God spoke w/Moses & initiated t/Covt.). The New w/JC & Mt. Zion.

Speaking of Mt.Sinai & all that it represented in the Law, author to Hebrews writes ==>

18 For you have not come to a mountain that may be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, 19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word should be spoken to them.

This is all symbolic of t/Law. Symbols of Sinai are darkness, fire, trembling, & trumpets of judgement.

John MacArthur writes ==>

"To stand at the foot of Sinai, even without touching it, is to stand under judgement and doom. It demands and it punishes. Since no man in himself can fulfill its demands, no man in himself can escape its punishment. At Sinai, sinful and unforgiven man stands before an infinitely holy and perfectly just God. Guilty, vile, and undeserving of forgiveness, he has nothing to expect from Sinai but God's condemnation." [MacArthur, Hebrews, 412]

20 For they could not bear the command, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned."

Cf. Exodus chapt. 19 where it was stipulated that boundary markers be placed around t/Mountain so that no one enter. Man or beast would tread upon t/ground by penalty of death.

21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling."

That's t/Law; That's Mt. Sinai. It demands, but doesn't give. It condemns, but doesn't save.

Bunyan wrote about this is Pilgrim's Progress.

Faithful meets up w/Christian & Christian ask him what sorts of troubles he had met up with on t/journey. Faithful tells him of a man who overtook him, knocked him down, and left him for dead.

When Faithful came to, he asked t/man why he treated him thus. The man replied that it was because of his "secret inclining to the First Adam;" and then he struck Faithful w/another deadly blow on the chest & beat him backward; so he lay at his feet as dead as before.

Faithful then says ==>

So, when I came to myself again, I cried him mercy; but he said, I know not how to show mercy; and with that knocked me down again.

The Man was Moses who represents t/Law. God's Law demonstrates to us His Holiness & our Sin. It knocks us down, but it cannot lift us up. That's Mt. Sinai.

But look at verse 22 ==>

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,

In Bunyan's story, Faithful goes on to say ==> He (Moses) had doubtless made an end of me, but that One came by, and told him to stop.

Christian asks him, "who was that?"

Faithful replies, " I did not know Him at first, but as He went by, I perceived the holes in His hands, and in His side; then I concluded that He was our Lord."

Only He could release us from the debt t/Law placed on us. He is Zion, t/mediator of a better covt.

For it is contained in Scripture: BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOSEN STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE . . .

That is ==>

1. The Cornerstone of Our Belief (6a)

Note, Secondly ==>

2. The Confidence of Our Belief (6b)

Continues t/quote from Isaiah 28:16.

... AND THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NEVER BE PUT TO SHAME

He is t/one who freed Bunyan's Faithful. He is the one who frees us, breaking t/chains of Sinai.

As Charles Wesley wrote ==>

"Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night. Thine ye diffused a quickening ray: I woke—the dungeon flamed with Light! My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee."

We will pick it up here next time. Jesus said in John 8

32 and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."36 "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

What about you?

Are you sitting on top of Mt. Zion? Or are you buried under Mt. Sinai?

....