

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JUNE 12 - 16, 2023

Sermon Series 5.28 - 8.13

FORGED

IN THE FURNACE

MONDAY

Read **1 Peter 2:4-5; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 2:19-22**

People sometimes ask sarcastically, “What’s the meaning of life?” Hopefully, as believers our answer differs dramatically from others’—even from how we might have answered as pre-Christians. A thoughtful, contemporary American might respond: “Be kind and enjoy life.” A 1st century Israelite’s possible reply: “Follow God’s laws and bring honor to my family.” Our direct answer, likely murky to many: “Glorify God!”

Today’s featured Scriptures summarize God’s purposes for Jesus’ followers, His Bride and Church: “[Be] built up as a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:4), “[along with fellow believers] ... into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22). A key “how?” in this purpose: “Offer spiritual sacrifices ... through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5); moreover, “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Romans 12:1).

Ancient Jews, like some today, focused so much on religious rituals that many lost sight of God Himself. They commonly obsessed over meticulous, proper sacrificing. Some even revered the temple in Jerusalem to the point where it became idol-like, such that swearing “by the temple” became commonplace. Their problem has a very contemporary feel: worshiping the creation rather than the Creator.

What the early Hebrews missed—like many today—is that these things merely pictured the Savior, our Sacrifice (Romans 3:25) who said of His own body, “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*” (John 2:19). Jesus was the fulfillment of the Law (Matthew 5:17), as well as the fulfillment of the Jewish sacrificial system and even the temple.

Believers were first labeled Christians—“little Christs”—mockingly in ancient Antioch (Acts 11:26). But this is exactly what God calls us to and how He shapes us via life’s circumstances and our relationship with Him. We are to sacrifice—time, treasures and talents—in serving for God’s glory; but, as Romans 12:1 reminds us, we are to be sacrifices also. We need to worship God privately and communally; however, Scripture reminds us also that “[our bodies are] a temple of the Holy Spirit within” (1 Corinthians 6:19). How’s your walk progressing as a “little Christ,” a “living sacrifice” and a “temple” for God’s Spirit?

QUESTIONS

How do you answer the question, “What is the meaning of life?” How did some ancient Jews lose sight of God Himself via their meticulous religious practices? What does it mean to be a “little Christ”?

PRAYERS

For Student Ministries Outreach Trip to Salt Lake City

Pray that this experience can encourage Glenkirk students to show love towards communities that differ from them. Pray for the relationships that will be formed and strengthened on this trip, and that all would be sensitive to the needs of those around them. Pray that they would cherish the time they have together as a mission’s team.

TUESDAY

Read **1 Peter 2:4-7; Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 7:24-27; 1 Corinthians 10:4**

Throughout Scripture—both Old Testament and New—God and the Messiah are often referenced with “rock” and “stone” imagery. This may sound strange to us, but the context was deeply meaningful among ancient Jews. “[Such illustrations evoke] vivid imagery and a sense of security. God is a trustworthy, rock-solid Savior. ... Rocky areas were ... ideal locations for strong, protective city fortresses. Thus, [such phrasing] undoubtedly resonated deeply with God’s people.” (GotQuestions.org)

“In Daniel’s visions, [the prophet] saw the most powerful [empires] of the world (Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome) crushed by a ‘rock cut out of a mountain.’ This rock was, of course, referring to ‘the Rock’ ... (Daniel 2:44-45), who will establish His eternal kingdom over the ruins of all others.” (Christianity.com) Thus, upon Peter’s recognition that Jesus is “*the Christ, the Son of the living God,*” the Savior declared that “*on this rock I will build My church*” (Matthew 15:16-18).

Jon Courson shares a related story regarding Jesus and the temple’s construction, synching with “*the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone*” text of 1 Peter 2:7 and Psalm 118:22. “During the construction of Solomon’s temple, work went smoothly until the builders were unable to locate the cornerstone. ... One of them remembered a perfectly cut stone that was tossed over the gully

into the Kidron Valley because no one [had known] what to do with it (previously). ... The same thing happened to Jesus.”

“Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of Psalm 118, the stumbling stone of Isaiah 8, the foundation stone of Isaiah 28, the supernatural stone of Daniel 2 and the rock that miraculously gave Israel water in the wilderness [per] 1 Corinthians 10:4.” (David Guzik) “In the New Testament as Jesus begins His ministry, [faithful Jews] still do not understand that He is the climactic saving act of the God of the Israelites. But after Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, all doubt is removed (John 20:26-29). The spiritual Rock they had always worshiped had now become physical.” (GotQuestions.org)

Do you stand firmly upon “*the Rock*” that is Jesus Christ? With whom will you share this firm foundation?

QUESTIONS

Why are God and the Messiah often characterized with “rock” or “stone” references throughout Scripture? What does “*the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone*” (1 Peter 2:7) mean to you, given Jesus’ First Coming mission?

PRAYERS

For Student Ministries Outreach Trip to Salt Lake City

Pray that the students would appreciate and understand the situations they are walking into while in Salt Lake City, that they would have humility, wisdom, and respect as they interact with others so that their conversations with everyone whom they encounter are led by a love that comes only from God. May the Holy Spirit influence their conversations while they are in Salt Lake City.

WEDNESDAY

Read **1 Peter 2:7-8; Isaiah 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 1:22-25**

The end of 1 Peter 2:8 contains hard, controversial teaching: “*They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*” Pending your Bible translation, “*destined*” might be rendered “*appointed*,” “*planned*” or something similar. God’s critics may challenge, “Unfair! No one should be judged for something inevitable.” God’s defenders could counter, “Who are you to judge God? Does the Creator and Source of righteousness, truth and love need to defend Himself before you?”

Does “*as they were destined to do*” indicate that unbelievers’ damnation is certain due to disobedience, or that they were preordained to disobey, their stumbling an unavoidable consequence? Bible scholar Peter Pett offers tentative commentary: “These ‘disobedient ones’ ... [behave according to] their destiny ... to which they have been appointed (Romans 9:22). This may mean destined to stumble because they were disobedient, or even destined to disobedience.”

In another commentary on this verse, however, Pett offers helpful, resonant insights. “To disbelievers, rather than being the chief cornerstone, Jesus has become [the One who] gets in the way, a stumbling stone and an inconvenience. As they wander round ... they trip over the very stone which should be the foundation of their lives. ... He does not fit into their conceptions, and yet ... He is unavoidable. ... [Sadly,] they turn from Him and refuse to enter into His obedience.”

As a non-Christian “believing in God” for 39 years, I understand how walking faithfully with Christ could feel “inconvenient.” I didn’t dispute God’s existence, Jesus’ deity, nor even His atoning crucifixion and resurrection. I simply didn’t want to have to change and/or be accountable to God. I have a sister-in-law in a similar place, like many others. She trusts that intellectual “belief in God” and “professions I made as a child” qualify her as His.

Judging my sister-in-law’s salvation is God’s job, not mine. But I do know this: Jesus came as the Redeemer. Those rejecting Him as Savior and Lord make Him their Judge. Such a “stumble” has dreadful, eternal consequences. Do all you can—by a well-lived life, lovingkindness and caring, winsome conversations—to help others avoid that destiny!

QUESTIONS

The 1 Peter 2:8 verse contains hard, controversial teaching: *“They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.”* How do you interpret this passage? How might following Christ be “inconvenient” for an unbeliever?

PRAYERS

For Student Ministries Outreach Trip to Salt Lake City

Pray for the times of worship and spiritual encounters during the week. May they help the students to grow in faith and in the fruits of the Spirit during this week, and to carry these lessons home so that their faith would continue to grow in the months and years to follow. We pray that these students come back home with confidence and boldness to share their faith with others.

THURSDAY

Read **1 Peter 2:9; Exodus 19:5-6; Hebrews 4:14-16**

In 1 Peter 2:9—written to believers persecuted and exiled by ancient Rome—Peter shares encouragement that is meaningful to ancient Jews: “*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.*” God originally called Israel to be “*a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*” (Exodus 19:6) and later, “*a light for the nations*” (Isaiah 49:6). Some believe that Jesus’ true Church has supplanted ethnic, geopolitical Israel as God’s “*people for His own possession*” (1 Peter 2:9), a consequence of Israel’s general rejection of the Savior.

Whether you share this view or not, the Bible clearly states that Jesus ushered in the new covenant while obsoleting the old one (Hebrews 8:13) via His crucifixion and victorious resurrection. Anyone reconciling with God thereafter—whether historically Jewish or Gentile—would do so only by turning from sin and following Jesus, embracing Him as Lord and Savior.

Hebrews’ human author called Jesus “*our great High Priest*” (Hebrews 4:14). Monday’s devo touched upon the Christians’ call to be “*little Christs,*” fashioned into increasing Christlikeness (“*sanctification*”) by the Holy Spirit. “*In the Jewish system, a priest mediated between the people and God. ... The high priest entered into the Most Holy Place ... [after making] a sacrifice for himself. ... Jesus as High Priest [intercedes] for us (with the Father). His sacrifice ... provides cleansing for our sins. ...*

He made the necessary sacrifice for us ... once and for all ... [and] His mediation for us continues.” (Compelling Truth)

“Whoa!” you might challenge. “Jesus’ atoning sacrifice was one-time, complete and sufficient! He declared from Calvary’s cross, ‘It is finished!’ (John 19:30). I can’t go to the cross and I’m certainly far below the divine majesty of my righteous Redeemer!” And you would be right, at least technically.

As a Christian, however, you can prayerfully intercede for others, persistently asking God to stir their spirits and open them increasingly to receiving His light. You can love them sacrificially, for God’s glory. Be a faithful, “priestly” intercessor and sacrificer “[walking] in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:2).

QUESTIONS

How does being “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9) echo how God called ancient Israel? How is Jesus your Jesus “great High Priest” (Hebrews 4:14)? How is God calling you to be “priestly”?

PRAYERS

For Student Ministries Outreach Trip to Salt Lake City

Pray for safety as they drive to and from Salt Lake City and that the group would stay physically healthy and safe during their time away from home. Pray for the leaders of the trip that they would be examples in speech, life, and love, and that they would have discernment to address any challenges that may arise.

FRIDAY

Read **1 Peter 2:10; Ephesians 1:3-11; Galatians 4:4-7**

I am a board member for Three Angels Haiti, an experience which is simultaneously humbling, awesome and unsettling given Haiti's poverty and continuing challenges. We visited Haiti first in 2014, impressed by the brightness and joy of the 300 students and 15 orphans cared for by this ministry. Like my colleagues, I experience great pleasure when an Angel House orphan is adopted into his/her "forever family"—particularly since these children were abandoned previously, likely dying had God not brought them to Three Angels.

In 1 Peter 2:10, we read of the wonder of adoption into God's family upon accepting Christ: *"now you are God's people ... now you have received mercy."* And our felt joy here parallels God's own joy. Jesus declared, *"There [is] more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine ... who need no repentance"* (Luke 15:7). Further, we have assurance that our adopting Father will never abandon us (Hebrews 13:5).

"Adoption was [uncommon] in the Jewish world. [An Israelite's] standing was based on [his/her] birth. ... In the Roman world [however], adoption was a significant and common practice. ... When we come to faith in Christ, our debts are cancelled, we are given a new name, and we are given all the rights that heirs of God possess. ... So, Christians have been born [again] into God's family (using a Jewish metaphor) and

adopted into God’s family (using a Roman metaphor). [Accordingly,] Christians are forever part of God’s family.” (GotQuestions.org)

The Apostle Paul characterized our Christian adoption using an agricultural illustration meaningful among ancient cultures, also tapping the common biblical reference to Israel as an “olive tree” (Jeremiah 11:16, etc.). Christ-following “Gentiles” join Israel’s faithful remnant in forming Jesus’ true Church as “a wild olive shoot ... grafted in ... now [sharing] in the nourishing root of the olive tree” (Romans 11:17).

“God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons and daughters” (Galatians 4:4-6). In Christ, you are in God’s “forever family”—celebrate! Whom will you encourage to join you there?

QUESTIONS

How do the biblical images of orphans and adoption resonate with you? How has being adopted into God’s “forever family” changed you? Are these changes apparent to others?

PRAYERS

For Student Ministries Outreach Trip to Salt Lake City

Pray that the main focus of this trip is to show the love of Christ towards everyone whom the students encounter, and that God will continue to water the seeds that are planted during this trip.

Sources

- GotQuestions.org quotes can be found at <https://www.gotquestions.org/Rock-of-salvation.html> and <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-adoption.html>.
- Christianity.com's quote can be found at <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/salvation/what-does-it-mean-that-god-is-the-rock-of-salvation.html>.
- Jon Courson's quote is from *Jon Courson's APPLICATION COMMENTARY: New Testament* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003).
- David Guzik's quote can be found at https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/psalm/psalm-118.cfm.
- Peter Pett's quotes are from <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/pet/1-peter-2.html>.
- Compelling Truth's quote can be found at <https://www.compellingtruth.org/Jesus-high-priest.html>.



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