

The Temple of True Worship

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[0 : 0 0] Well let's turn now to tonight's reading from 1st Peter Page 1014, if you're using the visitor bible there 1 Peter chapter 1 And again we're reading this passage from chapter 1 verse 22 through to chapter 2 verse 10 And we're thinking about over these few weeks, what is the church?

What is the church? So let me begin chapter 1 verse 22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love Love one another earnestly from a pure heart Since you have been born again Not of perishable seed but of imperishable Through the living and abiding word of God For all flesh is like grass And all its glory like the flower of grass The grass withers and the flower falls But the word of the Lord remains forever And this word is the good news that was preached to you So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander

Like newborn infants long for the pure spiritual milk That by it you may grow up into salvation If indeed you have tasted the Lord is good As you come to him A living stone rejected by men But in the sight of God Chosen and precious You yourselves like living stones Are being built up As a spiritual house To be a holy priesthood To offer Spiritual sacrifices Acceptable to God Through Jesus Christ For it stands in scripture Behold I am laying in Zion a stone A cornerstone Chosen and precious And whoever believes in him Will not be put to shame So the honour Is for you who believe But for those who do not believe The stone that the builders rejected Has become the cornerstone

And a stone of stumbling And a rock of offence They stumble Because they disobey the word As they were destined to do But you Are a chosen race A royal priesthood A holy nation A people for his own possession That you may proclaim The excellencies of him Who called you out of darkness Into his marvellous light Once you were not a people But now you are God's people Once you had not received mercy But now you have Received mercy Amen This is the word of the Lord And may he Bless it to us this evening Well it will help me And I hope it will help you If you turn up your Bibles with me To the passage that Paul read for us In 1 Peter

And the beginning of chapter 2 Looking particularly today At verses 4 to 8 We have been looking at this passage now For a few weeks And asking the question What is the church?

[3 : 4 8] And seeking the answer From these verses That Peter writes In this first letter of his And I think we have seen already That the apostle Peter Is quite clear He tells us that When the Christian Finds his true hope In Christ Then inevitably He finds his true home In the church of Jesus Christ Not in a building Not in an institution And nothing at all To do with structures And ceremonies Or any of these sorts of things But a home Which is At the household Of the living God The family of God It's the home Of true life And we saw First of all That we are born Into that home Of true life Through God's Imperishable seed Chapter 1 Verse 23 We're born Of his seed We're born by The living And abiding word Into Imperishable Abiding

Life His Home Is the home Of true And everlasting life And We are thus Begotten of God Brought into his family Born into that Everlasting life In order That we should be together The family Of true love Verse 22 We are purified He says For Sincere Brotherly Love And therefore Our calling Is that we should Grow up Grow up From infancy To maturity As chapter 2 Verse 2 says Grow up Into salvation And we do that As we grow Together In love We do that He says By putting away Everything that is Anti-love Putting away Malice And deceit And hypocrisy And all of that And instead Craving The pure Spiritual milk

Of the life Of Christ himself So the church Is the home Of true life It's the family Of true love But as we come To verses 4 To 8 Of chapter 2 We see that Peter wants us To see that the church Is more even Than that More than just God's family In fact It's about God Himself The church of Jesus Christ Is God's own Dwelling place Verse 4 As you come to him A living stone Rejected by men But in the sight of God Chosen and precious Or better perhaps Chosen and honored You yourselves Like living stones Are being built As a spiritual House And that spiritual house Is God's own Dwelling place It's where God Has chosen To live To presence himself Forever It's his temple It's the temple Of the one And only True and living God

On this earth Look at Verse 5 there He speaks about Living stones Being built Into a spiritual House Now all of that Language I hope you recognize From our sermon This morning All of that language Is temple language Verses 4 to 8 Lift concepts Directly out of The Old Testament It's the language Of priesthood And sacrifices And so on And Peter here Is taking it You can see And applying it Directly To The New Testament Church The Church of Jesus Christ And what he's saying So very clearly By doing that Is that the Church Of Jesus Christ Is now The temple Of true Worship of God And the only temple Of true worship Of God That remains In the whole Wide world Today The only place Where God Himself is found Dwelling In the midst Taking up His personal Residence Among human beings

Now of course That has monumental Implications For all humanity For every thought About God That any human being Ever might have Where God May be found How God If he exists Might be truly Worshipped And we need to be Quite clear About two things Peter is saying To us That the Church Of Jesus Christ Is the only true Way to God In this whole Wide world Among all peoples And all nations From all cultures And all backgrounds And that through The Church Of Jesus Christ And in it Is the only True Worship of God The only way To God And the only True Worship of God And I want to Think about each Of these things In turn First of all The Church Is the only Real way To God For this whole Wide world Verses four to eight Here are telling us Very clearly

[8 : 52] About the only Place The sole Place Where the true And living God Can be encountered By any human being Personally Now we don't have time To go through the whole Story of the Bible Here tonight But if you go right To the very beginning Of the Bible story In the book of Genesis You will find that Humankind Were created by God To be worshippers That's why God Made us And We began existence In God's dwelling place Humankind began Their life In the garden of Eden In the place Where God himself Dwelt Perfectly in harmony With those That he'd made us What Genesis one And two describe It describes Doesn't it A world of pure Worship Where everything Is at one And in harmony When God and man Is at one All creation Is at one And God says Everything Is good Everything Is very good

But of course Just turn the page To Genesis chapter 3 And you read Of the disaster Of humankind's rebellion That destroys That whole world Of perfect worship And by the end Of Genesis chapter 3 You know the story Man is cast out Of God's Garden temple Cast out of Eden With no way back It's terrible The way is barred The flaming swords Of the cherubim Preventing it Thankfully That is not the end Of the story Of humanity In many ways It ought to be The end But it's just The beginning Isn't it Of the story Of God's Extraordinary mercy And grace Because God's mercy And his grace Leads him To come back Into the midst Of a chosen people The seed of Abraham The people of Israel That he redeems Out of the land of Egypt And after the great Constitution At Sinai

As his people God literally Pitches his own tent Right in the midst Of all his people As they travel Through the wilderness The tabernacle And he lives With them In the midst Yeah of course Not quite as simple And straightforward As that Because no one Not even Moses Can enter fully Right into God's tent Because the glory Of his Perfection Is so fatally damaging To sinful human beings He couldn't go right in That's what we're talking About this morning To the holiest place Where God's glory was But at least God was near To his people And in due course Of course As history went on That tabernacle That tent Became The permanent structure Of the temple In Jerusalem Built by Solomon God's More permanent Dwelling place In the midst of Israel In the midst Of his nation At the heart of the world

That's why of course Later on in the story Of God's people The exile When God's people Were thrown out Of the land of Israel And taken away to Babylon That's why It was so awful It wasn't just because God's people lost their homes And their livelihoods And their land And all of those things It was above all Because they lost Their access To the temple And therefore They were even more Distanced once again From God himself Because the temple God's house Was the only Access point To God In this whole Wide world And all through The Old Testament All through the Bible You'll find total Clarity on that Even in the wilderness Even in the In the centuries In Israel Before the temple Was built It was impossible To worship God In just any way You chose Just like the other Pagan nations Worship their gods You couldn't just Make temples And have sacrifices In any old place

Where you wanted No, no, no Moses said repeatedly To God's people You shall worship The Lord your God Only Only in the place He will choose To put his name there To put his habitation His dwelling place there Read in Deuteronomy Chapter 12 Repeatedly that command And many, many other places Only in that one place That God chose Now why was that?

[13 : 26] Well, for the very simple And obvious reason That the God Of the people of Israel Was real Unlike the gods Of all the other peoples He was unique He was alive He was real And he chose Where to dwell Himself He chose where To make himself known Because he's the true And living God Who made all things Who rules All creatures And so you can only Seek him And find him Where he actually is Not where he isn't Where he chooses to be Where he chooses To be found All the other gods Because they were just Figments of human imagination You could build a temple Anywhere It didn't matter Where you built the temple There was no real God In it But the true The living God The one God Can only be found Where he actually is And now you see Peter says Now that the climax Of God's story Has come In the unique person Of Jesus Christ In God The Son Himself Verse 4 you see He says

We come to Him We come to the Lord God Himself That's who He's speaking about In verse 3 Tasting and seeing That the Lord is good From Psalm 34 The psalm that we sang A little earlier He's quite clear you see Verse 5 That we come with Acceptable sacrifices To God How?

Through Jesus Christ We come To the dwelling place Of God We come To the permanent dwelling Of God Among human beings Only one way And that is now Through Jesus Christ He is the only Real way To God For any human being In this world Because He's the fulfillment Of all God's promises Through the prophets And they said That at last God's dwelling place One day Will be with man Permanently forever That's why Peter's quoting From Isaiah The prophet there In verse 6 From Isaiah 28 I think verse 16 It is About a A new chosen And an honored Precious cornerstone Of His temple Which is a hymn Notice Not an it Behold I am laying In Zion A stone A cornerstone

Chosen And honored And whoever believes In it No Whoever believes In Him Will not be Put To shame The hymn Is the same He of verse 4 Isn't it As you come To Him A living stone Rejected By men He Jesus Christ Is that Living stone Honored By God The one who was Promised long ago By the prophets Like Isaiah And that's exactly What Peter of course Had heard Jesus Talking about Many many times Something greater Than the temple Is now here In your presence That's what he said To the people That's why it caused Scandal Because what could Possibly Possibly be greater Than the temple Where the true And living God Made Himself dwell Well nothing of course Except The everlasting New Permanent Dwelling place

Of God incarnate In the person Of God the Son And that's what Jesus was speaking about Himself His own body When he said To the Jewish leaders Who hated him You destroy this temple And I will raise it up In three days And he was speaking Of his own body And Peter had heard Jesus speaking In that way Which is why he can Pass on And teach the church And of course Peter had also heard Jesus speaking About building his church Upon this rock Do you remember Matthew chapter 16 Well look at verse 4 What is that rock That living stone Who is that That chief cornerstone That he speaks about In verse 6 Who is the stone That the builders Rejected That he speaks about In verse 7 Who is it Well Peter's absolutely

[17 : 49] Plain and clear Isn't it It's none other than Jesus Christ Alone Isn't it extraordinary That the church Of Rome Can think that Peter Himself Personally Is the rock That the church Is built on And that to Communicate And to commune Truly with God Today You have to come To Peter Through all his Supposed successes As the bishops Of Rome The popes That's not what Peter himself Is saying here Is it Look Does Peter say In verse 4 Come to me To meet the living God Of course not He says Come to him Does he say In verse 6 Believe in me Peter For this honour No he says Believe in him Lord Jesus Christ You don't commune With God Through Peter Or through any man No the spiritual Sacrifices That are acceptable To God Come How verse 5

Come through Jesus Christ And Jesus Christ Alone He is the only Real way To God In this whole Wide world He was rejected By man Says Peter In verse 4 Yet he was Chosen and precious Honoured By God And that same Honour Verse 7 It's the same word As translated Precious In those two Places The same honour He says Verse 7 Who is it for?

For you who Believe In him Simple as that So you don't Need to fear He's saying to them You don't need to Be made to feel Inferior Just because You are rejected By the religious Establishments Of the world The first century Jewish establishment Rejected These first readers These first Christians Because they said To them Oh you've no history You've got no temple You've got no priests You're the ones Who have departed From the faith The true faith Of our fathers That's what the Roman magisterium Said to the Protestant reformers In the 16th century You've departed From the true faith You've left The true temples The true church The true priesthood The true descendants Of Peter But no religious Establishment Anywhere In the world Today That thinks It holds the keys To the true way To God Because it has Impressive buildings

Or it has priests Or it has structures Or it has history Or clergy Whatever it thinks No human establishment Like that Has the true way To the one living God Verse 7 And the honour Of that Is For you who believe For you who believe In the Lord Jesus Christ And love And trust him With obedient faith It's those people That Jesus Is building together Like living stones Into the place That he chooses To dwell Into his Spiritual home Where his own Holy Spirit Can feel at home With his true family Which alas So often Is not the case Among some of the Strictures and the Structures of Grandiose religion Even if it uses The language of Christianity But so often Has absolutely None of the true Life of Christ And ignores the Words of Christ The teaching of Christ The way of Christ

And nor of course Is the way To the true and Living God To be found For any other Religious path In this world Any other Religious paraphernalia Jesus Christ Alone Is the cornerstone Is the living stone And so through him Only him Is the true way To God No one Comes to the Father Except Through Me Those are Jesus' Words In John 14 Verse 6 And clearly That means Doesn't it also Secondly That through him Is the only True worship Of God Peter echoes The entire Bible That the Whole purpose Of human existence Is to worship God truly And that as we Come to Jesus Christ in faith We are being Restored To that true Destiny Verse 5

[22 : 26] Says it Doesn't it That we are Built into A spiritual House Of priests All Offering Spiritual Sacrifices That are Pleasing to God Through Jesus Christ We are Redeemed For lives Of living Sacrifices How Paul Puts it In Romans 12 Peter says The same Living Sacrifices From living Stones Not Notice Not just From one Special class Of people Who are Priests We're all Priests Now in the Temple of God He says It's not Like the Old Testament Tabernacle Or temple Anymore That we're Looking at This morning Where a Special group Of priests Offer sacrifices For sin That whole Order As we saw This morning Has passed Away It's been Fulfilled by Jesus The great High priest And Peter Says the same In chapter 1 Verse 18 We have been Ransomed Forever By the Precious Blood Of Christ Eternal Redemption Through the Once for All sacrifice

Exactly what We read This morning The whole Book of Hebrews Makes that So clear That all Salvation And all Sacrifice For sin Is complete So there Are no Longer Any such Man-made Sacrifices But of Course There are Many Many Spiritual Sacrifices That do Remain That express Our Love for God Through Jesus Christ Express Our Fellowship With God Our Service To the Lord And that's What Peter Is speaking About here Just as We'll see In Hebrews 12 and 13 They speak About the Acceptable Worship Of living Sacrifice From lips That Praise And bless The name Of Jesus Christ Just what Paul talks About similarly In his Letters Ephesians 5 He says We offer Fragrant Sacrifices To God As we Imitate Him As we Walk In love Or to The Philippians In chapter 4 Where he Says We're We're Offering Fragrant Sacrifices To God As we As we Share In the Costs Material

And Physical And in Partnership In real Christian Mission That's True Worship Of God And it Can only Be that True Worship Of God If it's Through Jesus Christ In His Name And for His Sake We've Got to Admit This is True Many People Today Find that Kind of Statement Extreme And Offensive People Often Say Surely If we Do Good If we Are Kind If we're Loving If we Do The Right Things Surely It doesn't Matter Whether you Follow Jesus Or Buddha Or Allah Or Mohammed Or Nobody In Particular Why Are Why are You Christians Obsessed With Being So Exclusive And Perhaps You're Here Tonight Maybe That's What You Think But Peter Tells You Otherwise And I Want To Persuade

You Otherwise The Problem Now Is It's Becoming Even More Difficult For For Us To Try And Persuade People Because Not Only Is That Offensive It's So Offensive That Even To Say These Things Is Becoming Something That People Is Has Put Such Pressure On The Hydra To Ban To Ban Franklin Graham The Avengers For Coming And Saying These Things Because He Is Willing To Say Publicly That Whoever You Are Wherever You Are In The World Whatever Your Religious Background You Have To Repent And You Have To Bow Down And Worship Jesus Christ Whoever You Are Living A Way of Life That Is At Variance With What God Says Your Way Of Life Must Be You Also Must Turn Your Back On That Way Of Life And Repent And Follow Him I Hope You Won't Find That So Offensive You Won't Even Listen To The Christian Message And The Christian Argument Because The Bible's Answer To The Question Why Must You Be So Exclusive

The Bible's Answer Is This Because Jesus Christ Is Real Because He Is The True And Living God Because He Is Unique And Because He Is The One And Only Way To Knowing God And Finding His Salvation And Because Jesus Himself Says That Worship Is Only Real And Is Only Acceptable To God If It's In His Name And It's In His Honor He Alone Is The Chosen And Precious One And The Church And Evangelists And Preachers Who Are Passing On That Message Are Simply Passing On The Message That Jesus Christ Came Into This World To Proclaim That's Why Jesus In Matthew Chapter 25 Read it Later On You Might Have Heard The Story Of The Sheep And The Goats Where Jesus Is Talking About Judgment Day

[27 : 28] And He's Saying There'll Be A Sheep And The Goats Between Those Who Are Saved For Eternal Life And Others Who Must Go Away To Eternal Punishment And Jesus Criteria For Judgment On That Day Will Not Be What People Say With Their Lips But People Have Done In Response To His Message But The Key Issue Is Whether What You Have Done Whether Your Works Have Honored And Blessed Jesus Brothers And Sisters Jesus People Jesus Household Jesus Church Because If You've Honored And Blessed His Family His Church Because They Are His Chosen And Precious People Because They Are His Beloved Ones Jesus Says You've Done It To Him And You Belong Obviously

With Him And His Family Forever But He Says Equally If You Have Scorned And Hated Christ's People You Have Simply Shown Your Own Scorn And Hatred For Jesus Christ And The Lord Is Very Clear There Will Be Many People Who On The Day Of Judgment Will Face A Very Shocking Judgment From The Lord Jesus Christ Even Those Will Say Lord Lord Didn't We Do Wonderful Things Didn't We Proclaim Things And Do Things In Your Name And Jesus Will Say To Them Depart From Me You Workers Of Lawlessness I Never Knew You I Never Knew You Because The Only Way To God And The Only True Worship Of God Is Through Jesus Christ And Therefore Within His Dwelling Place Among His People Where The Communion With The Living God Can Be Found In His Church And Through His Gospel That's Why One

Of The Sayings Of The Early Church I Think It Was Cyprian One Of The Early Fathers Who First Put It This Way In Latin Extra Ecclesia Nulla Salus Outside The Church Of Jesus Christ There Is No Salvation Outside The Church There Is No Salvation Of Of Of Of Of Of Of Of Of Of The Church Is The Church Is Any Institution Of Man Or Is Controlled By Man Or Any Particular Branch Of The Church That Thinks It's The Only Way To God It Means The Church As Peter Is Describing It Here The Living Church Of The Living God Where God Dwelling It Then Who Are The People Who Share That Honor With Jesus Of Belonging To His Church Who Can Know That They Are Truly Part Of The Only Temple Of True And Living Worship In The Universe Well Look at Verse 7 It's Clear Isn't

It Very Clear The Honor Is For You Who Believe Believe In Jesus Christ The Cornerstone Look at Verse 8 There Or Verse 7 For Those Who Do Not Believe He Becomes Verse 8 A Stone Of Stumbling A Rock Of Offense You Can't Come Close To God The Father Unless You Believe Through God The Son And Notice Notice In Verse 8 What Belief Really Does Mean Those Who Stumble Through Disbelief He Says Stumble Because They Disobey The Word That Is The Gospel Word

Of God's Call Through Jesus Christ Alone The Word To Surrender Their Lives To Jesus Christ The Sovereign And Savior See The Truth Is You Can Be A Member Of A Church You Can Even Be A Leader Of A Church All Kinds Of Knowledge All Kinds Of Accolades From Others But You Can Have A Heart Full Of Disobedience Can't You A Heart That Disregards God's Word Denies God's Word So You Don't Actually Belong Among God's People In His Church That's What Jesus Himself Found Among Many Many In His Own Day And It's No Less True Today And Notice How Clear Peter Is Here In This Verse Eight About The Culpability Of Unbelief This Is So Important Because You Meet People Don't They Who Say To You Well It's Good For You That You've Got Faith I Respect That I Wish I Could Have Your Faith But I Don't You

[32 : 31] Kind of Like Saying Well You Know I Wish I Could Run Fast Like You But I Can't So It Was Some Characteristic That We're Born With Some People Have It Some People Don't Now Peter Is Absolutely Clear Look There Are Only Two Possible Responses To Jesus Christ Aren't There There Is Obedient Belief Which God Honors People Who Rejoice In The Gospel Of Jesus Christ Or There Is Disobedient Unbelief Those Who Reject His Word In The Gospel The Truth Is He's Saying You Can Obey God But Your Problem Is You Don't Want To Obey God You Don't Want To Accept His Rule His Control His Sovereignty Over Your Life You Stumble Because You Disobey The Word He Says As They Were Destined To Do He's Saying This Is No Surprise To God God

Purposed It This Way From The Very Beginning That Jesus Christ His Son Should Be The Touchstone The Touchstone Of Honor For All Who Believe And Obey And Of Dishonor For All Who Refuse And Who Disobey He Has Set His Son At The Center Of The World At The Center Of History The Center Of Every Human Being Life And Destiny And You Either Stand On That Great Cornerstone Or Stumble Over It You Either Obey And Rejoice In Jesus Or You Disobey And You Reject Him And So The Church Of Jesus Christ Is The Only True Temple Of Living Worship It Is The Place And It Is The Place Alone Where True Worship Of God Is Possible Through Jesus Christ Alone It Is The Place Where Our True Life's Purpose

Can Be Realized And Fulfilled Or Lost Forever And Ever Outside There Can Be No Worship There Can Be No Salvation There Can Be No Fellowship None With The True And Living God But Inside That Is For All Who Come To Him Come To The Living Stone Believe In Him Inside There Is That Wonderful Permanent Declaration At The End Of Verse Five Proclaims Do You See Acceptable To God Through Jesus Christ Acceptable In fact It would Be better Even To Translate It Well Pleasing To God Through Jesus Christ Once You're Inside Jesus Household In The Household Of True Life In The Family Of True Love Which Is The Temple Of True Worship Once You're Inside It Doesn't Matter Where You've Come

From It Doesn't Matter What You Once Were Because You Believed And Trusted In Him Look at The End Of Verse Six Isn't That A Wonderful Promise You Will Never Be Put To Shame God Has Declared Acceptable Well Pleasing Through Jesus Christ Never To Be Put To Shame Friends That's The gospel Of The Lord Jesus Christ That's The Offensive Message Apparently No one Is to Hear Because It Might Do Such Damage

Church It's The temple Of True Worship Forever Through Him Let's Pray Lord We Thank You That You've Opened The Kingdom Of Heaven You've Opened The Father's House So That We Can Find A Way Back To Our True Destiny Our Destiny Of Worship Serving You Through Jesus Christ Forever So Keep Us Lord We Pray Keep Us Always Coming To The Lord Jesus In Obedient Faith So That As Living Stones Kept Alive In You We Might Always Be The Temple Of His Holy Spirit All The Days Of Our Life And Then Forever In Glory To The Praise Of Your Glorious Name Amen