

IDENTITY: *Who in The World Are We?*

Got Hope? Messages from 1 Peter

March 13 & 14, 2010 o 1 Peter 2:4-12

Intro: Recently I spoke at the Edge, our high school ministry. It was a great experience. God is doing something amazing among our teens. Whether young or old, we all need to experience revival. Let's **pray** together.

Hanging around so many teens got me thinking about that transition from childhood to adulthood. Teens are in-between and they're taking a step into a new scary world. Do you remember being there? When we get out of high school, we grapple with our identity. *I'm entering the adult world and things are going to be different.* They have to be - when you turn 18, there are certain responsibilities. The transition gives us an opportunity to reinvent ourselves.

The same is true is for us as a church. This week we're celebrating the 18th B-day of Dayspring Fellowship. It's time to move into adulthood. Responsibility knocks and we need to answer. In fact, we need an answer to the question, *who in the world are we?* We must know who we are because our identity will ultimately determine our actions. Our understanding of *who we are* is lived out in *what we do*.

Our text for study today gives us the answers we need. We are in 1 Peter, looking at 2:4-12, where we will learn the basis for our identity. This section is theologically thick, but we can make sense of it. Let's go. **2:4 As you come to him the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.** The focus is on Jesus. We learn that *our identity is based on him.* He is called *the living stone.* Metaphors are common in the Bible. They are not meant to confuse, but to communicate - to convey truth. Peter wants his readers to grasp that *Jesus is the solid rock.* The idea is that if we build on him, we will experience *stability.* When you think of

a rock, you may imagine something *common and worthless,* but Jesus is *chosen by God and precious to him.* And you may picture a *lifeless cold thing,* but this rock is the *living stone.*

This says that we, *like living stones,* are attached to him and to one another. We're being built together into *a spiritual house.* The idea is that we function as the meeting place of God and men. He further explains our identity by calling us a *holy priesthood.* Again the intersection between people and God is in view. Priests bring God to man and man to God. We're *set apart* for that purpose.

6 For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." *Or, never be disappointed.*

The original readers were familiar with rock construction. When they read of Jesus as the *cornerstone,* they envisioned the visible support on which the rest of the building relies. The cornerstone is in the preeminent position. He's saying that *everything is built on Jesus.* And *the significance of any other stone is based on its relationship to the cornerstone and connection with others.* This leads me to *the first way* in which this text answers the question: *who in the world are we?*

oWe are connected in Christ. Picture the implications of this analogy. *Think of what it means to be part of something bigger than yourself!* Our identity is established by our connection to Christ and one another. We don't merely live for our own petty preoccupations. We're about something bigger than that. We're a team. I heard a great saying: *Play for the name on the front of your jersey, not the name on the back.* The name on the front is the team's name. The name on the back is your own name. This means that an athlete should compete as part of the whole, not for his own personal glory. It seems funny to me that we refer to certain people as *Christian celebrities.* I'm not sure there should be any such thing. To be a Christian

is to celebrate Jesus, not self. It's about him. It is not all about you alone. You're a piece in a beautiful puzzle. Why stay disconnected? One Lego on the floor isn't fulfilling its potential. It is not a house yet. It must be connected, linked to others. Don't be alone. These verses emphasize dependence upon Christ and dependence upon each other. Our meaning is *derived* from our connection to him and it is *lived out* in connection with others.

These next few verses contrast what people do with Jesus. There are two options: *build on* him or *trip over* him. *Derive your identity* from him or *discard him*.

7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," Christ has always been controversial and that won't change. Note the two very different responses: belief or unbelief; reception or rejection. (Is 8:14 also quoted by Jesus and Paul.) 8 and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble *because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for*. This explains that people refuse to acknowledge Christ because they demand doing their own thing. That's human nature...

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. He reminds the reader of what's been done for us! (From Hos and quoted in Rom 9. *Rooted. MM*.) *This reveals our worth!* It gives another answer to the question: *who in the world are we?*

oWe are the people of God. Think of what it means to belong to someone who loves you! The Bible teaches that *we belong to God*. Is 43:21 my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself... Mal 3:17 - They will be mine ... my treasured possession. 1 Cor 6:19 ...You are not your

own. Everyone wants to belong. Don't ever think that no one wants you. God does. He loves us and has made us his! **R.**

There are many songs about belonging to someone. People cherish romance - the wonder of being accepted, appreciated - the affection and tenderness of knowing someone isn't ashamed to be identified with you. *She's calling me her boyfriend!* But any joy we feel over being special to someone here on earth is at best just a little snapshot of what it means to belong to God. Picture yourself as his people and that mindset will not only *change your life*, it will *change the lives of people around you*.

Now this last section spells out how we should act.

11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. You're only a temporary earth-dweller. Don't wallow in the pollution; don't give in. Then he shows you the results of staying clean: 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Even when you live a good life, someone is going to slander you. People are looking for reasons to reject the gospel - let's not give them any! Don't slack off. We are people on a mission and the world is watching! This brings up a major idea about our identity. We are not *aimless*. We are not *ambivalent*. We are not *wandering without purpose*.

oWe have something vital to do. Think of what it means to live in a way that leads others to glorify God!

These verses say that we are on display. And how we live makes a difference. We can point people to God. It seems odd that Christians would ever be at a loss concerning what to do. Our role is earth shaking. Our work has eternal implications. Our lives display God's character. We represent him. How are we doing? Jesus said, Matt 5:16 - Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Concl: So, *who in world are we?* We are people *connected* to Christ and to each other. We're *the people of God*, loved by him with *something vital to do*. These aren't just things to *think* about. When we see ourselves the way God sees us, we will *live in a way that leads others to glorify God*.

If all of this is new to you and you don't know where to start, then go back to first 5 words: *As you come to him...* You want to experience this kind of stability and security? A new identity is yours when you come to him! **Prayer.**

Baptisms

Unused ideas and verses (More Meat):

4 - Form indicates a habitual approach

We want to think of Jesus the way God the Father does - *precious*.

5 - This metaphor teaches that we are identified with Christ.

Temple: 1 Cor. 3:16 - Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

Dwelling place.

Parallel in Eph 2:19-22 - Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Shift away from the theology of place: the localized manifestation of God's presence in the temple was replaced by the indwelling of the Spirit.

We're to function with unity, not uniformity. All in

harmony.

Who does the building? Jesus said, *I will build my church*.

6 - Verses 6-8 each contain quotations from the OT showing that scripture foretold that Christ would be sole foundation.

Another metaphor is the body. We are all members of the body, we all have a part to play, but Jesus is the head. He's the command center.

7 - This quote is originally from Is 8:14. Jesus quoted this in Mat 21:42. Paul does too, in Rom 9:33, and so does Peter when he was preaching, recorded in Acts 4:11.

8 - Their rejection was foreseen: John 3:36; Rom 11:8,11,30-32.

9 - Col 1:13,14 - For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

a chosen people - this phrase was used of Israel but here he's referring to the church - the people of Christ. Is 43:10,20

a royal priesthood - Related to king. Quoting Ex 19:6.

a holy nation - set apart for a purpose, pure.

10 - Dt. 4:20; 7:6; 14:2;

We used to belong to the devil - Eph 2:1-3,11-19.

11 - *sinful desires, which war against your soul*. James 4:1-3 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do

not have, because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

The attack is aimed at unprotected areas.

12 - on *good deeds*: Eph 2:10; Tit 3:8; James 2:18
Our example can actually move people to praise God!