

Who WE Are

Last week, we studied 'Who Israel Is and How Israel Began.'

This week, we'll see 'OUR IDENTITY' 'Who We Are.'

We'll begin by thinking back to compare them with us.

When Jesus called His disciples, He made them **fishers of men**:

Mark 1:17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

Today, we have a different calling in the body of Christ:

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

For now, Israel (the circumcision) no longer enjoys favored nation status with God. He sees them the same as us:

Gal 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Through Paul, we learn that God took Jew and Gentile and merged us into one body --- an entirely 'new' entity:

Eph 2:14-16 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

1 Cor 7:17-20 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

18 Is any man called being circumcised? (a Jew)
let him not become uncircumcised.

(Obviously, he can't **put his foreskin** back on. This is not talking about the medical technique 'foreskin restoration.' Rather, it means that a Jew doesn't **turn into** someone he's not. He doesn't **become** a Gentile it's just that God does not recognize a Jew as having any **advantage** today over the Gentile, according to Rom 3:1,2.)

Is any called in uncircumcision? (a Gentile)
let him not be circumcised.

(Obviously, we shouldn't take up **physical circumcision**. We don't become **spiritual Jews**. We are **not 'spiritual Israel.'** Neither do we convert to Israel's religion, Judaism.)

19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

Part of **our identity** in understanding **right division** is to realize which of God's commands we are to keep. **We, as new creatures, are NOT under Israel's LAW program:**

Rom 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

We are to discern that it is **through PAUL's writings ALONE** that we get our 'marching orders' from God:

1 Cor 14:37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I **(Paul)** write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

Whereas, **while on earth**, Jesus told His disciples to follow Him:

Matt 4:19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Matt 16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Matt 19:21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

None of those verses belong to us. They're not our program.

In the **but now**, Jesus, **from heaven**, instructs us to follow Paul:

1 Cor 11:1 Be ye followers of me **(Paul)**, even as I also am of Christ.

1 Cor 4:16 Wherefore I beseech you, **be ye followers of me (Paul)**.

Phil 3:17 Brethren, **be followers** together of me **(Paul)**, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

The **WAY** we are to follow Paul is according to
Paul's gospel
and the preaching of Jesus Christ

--- not by way of His **earthly** ministry ---

but, the way Paul preached Jesus:

Rom 16:25,26-a Now to him that is of power to stablish you
according to **my (Paul's) gospel**,
and the preaching of Jesus Christ,
according to **the revelation of the mystery**,
which was kept secret since the world began,
26 **But now** is made manifest,

Paul did not preach Jesus according to Jesus' earthly ministry:

2 Cor 5:16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the
flesh: yea, though we **have known** Christ after the flesh, **yet
now (that's the 'but now')** henceforth **(from now on)** know we
him no more.

Contrary to popular opinion,

we are not to **walk in the footsteps of Jesus**.

We are not to follow the PATTERN of His earthly ministry!

In the 'but now' program, we have a **different pattern**.

Paul is our pattern. We are to follow Paul:

1 Tim 1:16 Howbeit for this cause I **(Paul)** obtained mercy, that
in me (Paul) first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering,
for a pattern to them which should **hereafter (from now on)** be-
lieve on him to life everlasting.

Israel's program was phased out because of their lack of faith:

Rom 11:20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

In Romans chapters 9-11, Paul explained what happened to Israel, and why they are no longer prominent in God's program:

Rom 11:30-32 For as ye (Gentiles) in times past have not believed God, yet have now (that's the 'but now' time) obtained mercy through their (Israel's) unbelief:

31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

During the dispensation of grace, Israel lost favored nation status.

They used to be God's elect nation but not anymore:

Rom 10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

Rom 3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Both Jew and Gentile now have a 'one-ness' that had never been possible under Israel's program, in which they were God's chosen:

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

In the new man God created nationality, race, gender, or creed doesn't matter:

Col 3:10,11 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew,
circumcision nor uncircumcision,
Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free:
but Christ is all, and in all.

A Greek, in a wide sense, embraced all nations (not Jews) that made the language, customs, and learning of the Greeks their own. The primary reference is to a difference of religion and worship. The Greeks classified a person to be **a Barbarian** when they were a foreigner ignorant of the Greek language and because they spoke a strange language rudely and harshly.

A Scythian was regarded as the wildest of the rough Barbarians.

The issue of us being **'one' BODY of Christ** is only found in Paul's epistles. We'll go through several verses about it:

Eph 4:4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Col 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called **in one body**; and be ye thankful.

Rom 12:5 So we, being many, are **one body in Christ**, and every one members one of another.

We don't 'go up front, sign a card, get water baptized, and join a church' to be a member! God makes us a member when we believe the gospel of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection:

Eph 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for **we are members one of another**.

Eph 5:30 For **we are members** of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

We get in the body as members by spiritual baptism:

1 Cor 12:12-14 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

13 For **by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles**, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

Just as we have a spiritual baptism, we also have a spiritual circumcision, which is part of our identity:

Phil 3:3 For **we are the circumcision**, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

This next passage shows both our spiritual circumcision and our spiritual baptism:

Col 2:11,12 In whom also **ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands**, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12 Buried (**put all the way in and covered up**) with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith (**something you can't see**) of the operation of God (**God performs this baptism --- not a preacher**), who hath raised him from the dead.

The body of Christ is who we are.

Paul, and only Paul, wrote about it.

Through Paul's writings we learn our identity!

A diplomat represents his government to others. That's how we work for God:

2 Cor 5:20, 21 Now then **we are ambassadors** for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

We talk to people and tell them how they can be reconciled to God. The next verse explains **the Great Exchange**:

Jesus Christ took all our sin on Him and died to pay for it.

He gives us all His righteousness, when we believe it:

vs. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

We see **OUR Great Commission** just a few verses before, in:

2 Cor 5:18,19 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath **given to us the ministry of reconciliation**;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath **committed unto us the word of reconciliation**.

As good will ambassadors,

we are to teach Christ's D.B.R. so folks can be reconciled to God.

Jesus paid a debt He did not owe

because we owed a debt we could not pay.

Thus, we should live our lives unselfishly to bring glory to Him:

Rom 8:12 Therefore, brethren, **we are debtors**, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

When we recognize 'who we are' in Christ, it brings great relief:

Rom 8:1-4 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made (**not 'set'**) me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh (**Christ did for us**), God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

We **CAN** and we **OUGHT to** praise the Lord with our life:

Rom 6:11-13 Likewise **reckon** ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but **yield** yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Rom 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Knowing Christ already paid our sin debt, and we are forgiven

gives us motivation to honor Him with our lives:

Gal 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

We are designed to be God's children when we believe the gospel:

Rom 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Gal 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Unlike Jews being physically born into a covenant relationship with God -- God purposed to bring us into His family by **adoption**:

Eph 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

We are workers for God. It is **very important** that we work correctly so that we build **according to the BLUEPRINT**

God gave us through Paul:

1 Cor 3:9,10 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me (Paul), as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation (that is, on Jesus Christ, **according to the revelation of the MYSTERY --- Rom 16:25**), and another buildeth thereon. But **let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.**

We are God's project He works IN us, as well as through us:

Eph 2:10 For **we are his workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Phil 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

People are wrongly divided

because the scripture is not rightly divided.

Let's know **who WE are and who we aren't!**