

Our Identity – The Church

I Timothy 3:14-16

Introduction

- A. When a person suffers loss of identity, whether completely through amnesia or partially through acceptance of error, many serious problems prevent one from living a normal life.
 - B. It is possible for a group of people to lose their identity even though they are truly the people of God. They may be a church and possess all the glory, power, and privileges of such a relationship. And yet, through a loss of identity – they may exist in a sub-normal state.
 - C. Because of the working of Satan, the infiltration of the world, and the defilement of sin and error – each church must struggle to understand and maintain identity.
 - D. In all our discussion of the church we must keep in mind we are speaking of people – not a building – or simply of an institution.
- I. We are Described as The House of God – God's Dwelling Place.

A. The Old Testament analogy.

*And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them ...
And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims Exodus 25:8,22*

Comment: From the days of the Garden of Eden we see God at work developing a people for Himself! When He called His people out of Egypt He instructed them to build Him a sacred tent so He could dwell among them. He promised to meet with them on the basis of the of the sacrifice they were to bring.

B. The New Testament fulfillment.

In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Ephesians 2:21,22

Comment: The Church, which was brought into existence on the Day of Pentecost, is described as a group of people within whom, and among whom -- God has chosen to dwell. He has made us His habitation!

As God met with Israel on the basis of redemption (typified in the sacrifices) so He meets with us. This is one reason why the Lord Jesus is said to be the "chief corner stone" upon whom the church is built.

C. The practical instruction.

1. The priority of the spiritual – we belong to God.

To be right with God and to live in harmony with who we are – we must accept and practice the truth that we belong to God. Because He has chosen us and indwells us – we may not try to live the life of the non-Christian.

2. The practice of the spiritual – worship and evangelism.

As the Old Testament tabernacle was a place where God met with His people in worship and revealed Himself to the non-Christian world – so the church must be even more deeply involved in these two areas. Individually and corporately – we must be concerned with worship and evangelism. Any failure to practice our identity will cause us to live a sub-normal Christian life – whether individually or as a church.

II. We are Described as The Church – A Called-Out Assembly.

A. The Greek word (ekklesia) designates a people called by God.

Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. II Timothy 1:9

Comment: We become believers by God calling us into a relationship with Himself. As called of God we are then united with all those who have received a similar call. We are the Church.

B. The purpose of our call.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. I Peter 2:9

C. The privilege-responsibility of our call.

1. We have been called to fellowship.

God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. I Corinthians 1:9

2. We have been called to liberty.

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. Gal. 5:13

3. We have been called unto holiness.

For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. I Thessalonians 4:7

Conclusion: When we live out of harmony with our call – we lose our identity and forfeit the blessing of God.