Our Identity In Jesus Christ 2 (Ephesians 1-3) sermon for 10-02-16

**Identity**

* Identity is who you are, why you are that, what you are capable of, and what you ought to do with those capabilities.
* Your identity determines where you can and should go, what you can and should accomplish, and what you can and should expect.
* The level of your understanding of your identity will determine how far you go where you should go, how much you accomplish what you should accomplish, and how much you get what you should expect.

Ephesians 1-3 has much to say about who we are because of what Jesus has done for us. It reveals to us our identity in Jesus Christ.

Last week, we focused on Ephesians 1 which taught us about our identity as individuals in Jesus Christ.

* We learned that because God blessed us, chose us, predestined our lives, and accepted us, we now have redemption, forgiveness, and an inheritance.
* We learned that we must have the Holy Spirit open our eyes to the hope of His calling, the inheritance in the saints, and His power that is available to us.

Today, we will focus on Ephesians 2 which broadens the scope of our identity.

* Ephesians 2 does not speak to the identity of us as individuals so much as to the identity of the family or nation that we individuals create collectively.
  + **All of the believers around the world are viewed both as individuals by God and as a collective identity that the Bible calls a holy nation—a spiritual Israel.**

Since God’s relationship with Abraham and Abraham’s descendants was established in Genesis 17, physically there have been only two nations or families on the earth—Jews and Gentiles.

**Jews are the nation of people on earth who have a covenant relationship with God because they are descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; everybody else in the world are Gentiles.**

* “The term "covenant" is of Latin origin (con venire), meaning a coming together. It presupposes two or more parties who come together to make a contract, agreeing on promises, stipulations, privileges, and responsibilities.”—biblestudytools.com

Ephesians 2 teaches us how Jesus’ work affected the identity of both Jewish and Gentile nations.

**Ephesians 2**

And you *He made alive,* who were dead in trespasses and sins, **2**in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, **3**among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

**4**But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, **5**even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), **6**and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, **7**that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

* Listen to Paul’s transition from the use of the word “you” to the words “us” and “together”.
* **Our identity in Christ as an individual is a microcosm of a collective identity that we have with other believers.**

**8**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, **9**not of works, lest anyone should boast.

**10**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

* Everyone is made by the hand of God no matter the circumstance of their birth; and they are born to accomplish the good works that God planned for them—not just any good works that they decide to do arbitrarily.

**11**Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— **12**that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

* Paul tells us that being without Christ is the same as being a Gentile who is not entitled to any of the promises that God made to Israel; and since we weren’t included in those promises we had no hope and no relationship with God.
  + **Being a Gentile is more than just a physical human heritage, it’s also a spiritual condition of isolation from God before accepting Jesus as savior.**

**13**But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

**14**For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, **15**having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is,* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, **16**and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. **17**And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

**18**For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

* Who are these two “people” that Paul is speaking of? The two nations—Jews and Gentiles!
* Since the only people who have any hope of being saved are those who have a covenant relationship with God, the Jews were the only type of people who had God and hope in their lives.
  + So that means that all of us Gentiles had no hope of being saved, but that is not the end of the story!
  + God solved our dilemma of not being able to be saved by sending His Son, Jesus Christ to die for our sins.
    - Now **if we as Gentiles in the body will believe in our heart and confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and that He was raised from the dead, then we are made one with the nation of Israel in God’s eyes.**
    - **Consequently, we are included in all the promises and blessings that God promised to the Israelites as though we were Jews.**
    - **We have access to the Father because Jesus removed our sins by His blood so that God the Father could adopt us as sons.**

**19**Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, **20**having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner*stone,* **21**in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, **22**in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

**Our identity in Jesus Christ is inextricably linked with the spiritual identity of Israel** that God Himself established in Genesis 17 when He told Abraham—the father of the Jews—that circumcision would be a sign that Abraham and God had a covenant relationship.

**God’s intention for the church was not to create an organization entirely different than and separate from the Jews; His intention was to use the Jewish nation to bring the non-Jewish nations into the same covenant relationship that they have with God.**

We serve a Jewish Savior and Lord. We are to become united with Israel in this new identity of people saved from sin and death through grace by faith in Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

* Ephesians 2 teaches us more about our identity in Christ by contrasting it with our old identity without Christ.
  + Just like a Before and After picture
    - (Verse 5) **We were once dead in our spirits but now we are made alive in Christ.**
      * We were separated from God—rejected by God—because of our ancestors’ choice to sin. The moment Adam disobeyed God was the moment his spirit was cut off from God’s presence—he died. And ever since, humans born after him have been born with their spirit separated from God, but we who believe in Jesus have resurrected spirits. We are in friendship with God again like Adam before he sinned.
    - (Verse 6) **We were once debased but now are raised up together with Christ.**
      * We were brought under bondage to sin and death, but now are free to be righteous and live forever in heaven with Jesus.
    - (Verse 6) **We were once powerless but now are seated together with Christ.**
      * We were unable to resist sin or breakaway from the effects of sin, but now we can resist the devil and we have authority over disease, poverty, and demonic bondage.
    - (Verse 17) **We who were far from God have now been brought near to God.**
    - (Verse 19) **We were once separated from Israel but now we are joined to Israel.**