

Session 4

February 11, 2018

I AM A PRIEST

1 Peter 2:4-10

One of the cardinal rules for interpreting Scripture is to keep things in context. I disagree strongly with those who adopt “replacement theology,” a view that applies the Old Testament Scriptures addressed to Israel directly to the New Testament church. God is working through His church, but He is certainly not done with Israel! There are times, however, when God’s word to Israel does indeed apply to the church. And when the Bible does it, that’s different!

Such is the case with God’s description of His people in Exodus 19:5ff, “Now if you will listen to Me and carefully keep My covenant, you will be My own possession out of all the peoples...and you will be My kingdom of priests and My holy nation.” In our text this week, the apostle Peter applies this description to the church. In doing so, he highlights some key characteristics of Christ and His church.

He was appointed by God (vv. 1-6). Note the descriptive terms used and how honoring they are to Christ. He is *a living stone; chosen; valuable; spiritual; honored; cornerstone*. You can’t help but wonder if Peter—the Rock—is not reflecting back to Christ’s nickname for Him in Matthew 16. But more than just a stone like Peter, Christ is a cornerstone; that foundational rock upon which the rest of the building is not only built, but dependent upon. Regardless of what it is, if it doesn’t line up with Christ—the cornerstone—it’s crooked. He is God’s choice upon which to build His church...and hence His kingdom.

He was rejected by Israel (vv. 7-8). Throughout the Scripture, Christ—God’s chosen—was rejected by those He came to save. The suffering servant of Isaiah 53 who was despised and rejected, stricken and struck down, oppressed and afflicted, and cut down and crushed is the same Son of God who “came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). Again, notice the descriptive terms used this time; not from God’s perspective, but from Israel’s. First, He was *rejected*. The picture is one of builders tossing the stone aside because it didn’t meet their qualifications. As a result, they would later stumble over it and fall. In the same way, Christ was cast aside by His own people (because He didn’t meet their requirements) only to be tripped up by Him later. The picture is deepened by the phrase “a rock to trip over.” The words used here were also applied to the trigger mechanism of a trap. Once tripped, the trap was sprung and the prey found itself helplessly caught. The works salvation and self-righteousness of the Jews were simply incompatible with the message Christ proclaimed. Both the message and the messenger were thus rejected, only to leave them caught helplessly in condemnation.

He is proclaimed by the church (v. 9). The honor of being God’s *chosen race* (His select people), *a royal priesthood* (mediators of His grace), *a holy nation* (set apart for His purposes), *and people for His possession* (His own special treasure), is not simply a reward for following Christ. All of these attributes are given to the church for the same reason they were offered to God’s people back in Exodus 19. Just as God’s purpose for Israel was to proclaim the one true God and the salvation He offers to a dark and corrupt world, so the purpose of the church is stated at the end of verse 9: “so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”