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It's Bigger than You Think! *Dr. Dale V. Salico (November 2006)*

The realtor's sign in front of a cute little Southern California house in Old Town Orange caught our attention: "It's bigger than you think!" I said to Elaine, "Let's take a look!" We told the agent who greeted us that her sign had hooked our curiosity, even though we were not looking for a house. The living room and dining room were about what we had expected. So were the two bedrooms and a bath. At the back of the kitchen was an archway into a large addition that was completely hidden from the street. Entering it, we discovered a large family room, a second bathroom, and a porch facing a beautiful back yard. At the back of the addition was a nicely finished garage and workshop. The realtor's sign was right. The house was far bigger than we had thought!

I remembered that house recently, as I was studying I Peter 2:4-5:

As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- 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.

I had read that verse many times, and even preached it. But I had never asked the obvious question: "Who are these living stones?" I had thought of the living stones as church members, who, upon receiving Christ and following Him in baptism are built into the household of faith. I had even elaborated that each "stone" is selected and shaped by the Master Builder to fit a chosen location and special role perfectly suited for the qualities of that "stone."

All this is true enough. But Peter would probably say, "Take another look, Dale. This house is bigger than you think!" I thought that I knew who these "living stones" were. But I had not asked Peter who they were. The living stones Peter had in mind were those to whom he was writing. "*As **you** come to Him...**you** also are being built into a spiritual house.*" To whom did Peter write these words?

To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia... I Peter 1:1

The "living stones" were not the members of a local church. They were **congregations spread across five Roman provinces!**

When this fact gripped me, I exclaimed out loud, "He's not writing about a local church. He's writing about us! That's Transformation Ministries!" Our congregations are *God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout* Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Hawaii!

The implications of this expanded my understanding of Peter's entire epistle.

- The *spiritual house* is not a church. It is a movement of churches.
- The *holy priesthood* is not the membership of a local church, but an unnumbered band of believers living as salt and light throughout an entire region.
- And the *spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God* are their righteous words, deeds, and attitudes in all the towns and communities where they lived.

This maximized understanding of the *living stones*, *holy priesthood*, and *spiritual house* is confirmed in I Peter 2:9:

*...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.*

The Greek word used for people is LAOS, meaning a people group, a tribe, a nation, all those who are of the same stock and language. These citizens of heaven, spread across five Roman provinces, together formed a massive, united movement that Peter saw as capable, by the power of the Holy Spirit, of changing their worlds for Christ.

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. I Peter 2:12

For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.

I Peter 2:15-16

What does history reveal about the legacy left by these *living stones*? In their time and place, understanding themselves not merely as local congregations, but as a mighty movement of God, they actually changed their world for Christ. Wielding the spiritual weapons of love, truth, and faithfulness to Christ, they made a more permanent impact on the future than all the armies of Rome.

The same can be true of us. The churches of *Transformation Ministries* can become a mighty movement of God that will rewrite history, **IF** we will remember the words, **"It's bigger than you think!"**

Christian leaders must stop limiting what God is saying to the size of their local congregations. We must, like Peter, see each congregation as a *living stone* that by *coming to Christ* is *being built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, a holy nation-within-a-nation*, that will be used by God to bring transformation to the world, beyond all we can think or imagine.

Think about it...

1. In your study of Scripture, do you sometimes miss the big picture by looking only at your local world or church?
2. First century Christians, who did not have modern forms of communication, saw themselves as a mighty movement of God spread throughout their world. Why do you think Christians today usually do not think beyond their local church or community?
3. *"...it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men."* How should Christians today put these words into practice?