

Who Are You?

A Question Every Christian Needs to Answer

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“Buy truth and do not sell it.” (Proverbs 23:23)

Indeed truth [sound Bible teaching] is hard to come by; therefore, when God in His infinite grace leads you to the truth, you are to embrace and cherish it. You are to hold on to it tenaciously for life, happiness, and the blessings of time and eternity to come.

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So wake up sleeper, lift your head
We were meant for more than this
Fight the shadows conquer death
Make the most of the time we have left

We are the light of the world
We are the city on a hill
We are the light of the world
We gotta, we gotta, we gotta let the light shine¹

Are You Without Christ?

The plane to Heaven is on the runway. It is about to take off without you and you will miss Heaven, separated from God forever in the lake of fire (Rev 20:15). This is not good news.

But wait. It does not end in bad news. God in His matchless grace has made a way for everyone who desires to board the plane to Heaven. He offered His uniquely born One, Jesus Christ, as a sin offering for us. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). The sin penalty has been paid in full. “It is finished” (John 19:30). This clears the way for boarding. There is only one boarding pass, obtained through faith in the Person and the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6).

Are you willing to obtain the boarding pass to Heaven offered by Christ? If so, simply put your trust in Him Alone. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). This indeed is good news. Trust in Christ now, and your boarding pass to Heaven will be forever secured.

Are You a Believer In Jesus Christ?

Examine yourself to ensure that your fellowship with God is not broken through personal sin — mental (bad thoughts), verbal (bad words), overt (bad actions). However, if it is broken, God

has provided a grace solution for restoring fellowship. “If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Simply acknowledge your sins to God alone. He is faithful.



Heavenly Father, please “sanctify [the reader of this booklet] with Your Word, for Your Word is the truth.” Please let your truth sink deep and bring about transformation for the praise of Your glory in the wonderful name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Our responsibility is to give the world the right impression of God.”

John Wesley 1703-1792

Introduction

Who are you? Beloved of God, time is running out. You need to pause and take an honest inventory of your life and ask the right questions. Who am I? Where am I? Why am I here on planet Earth? Am I fulfilling my mission as my Master intends? How much more time is left of my God given days?

Scripture is clear: your “days are numbered” (Job 14:5). Your “days on earth are like a shadow” (I Chron. 29:15). A shadow is here this moment and, in the twinkling of an eye, it is gone. James, the brother of our Lord agrees. “Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (James 4:14).

The Lord’s disciples asked, “Lord do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them [the Samaritans]” (Luke 9:54)? His reply is worthy of our attention: “He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are” (Luke 9:55). Simplified: “You have no clue who you are.”

Who are you? This small question is in fact *the* big question! Christians often don’t know who they are and what their mission is and this is hurting the witness of the church, now more than ever. You cannot fulfill God’s plan for your life until you master two things: Who you are in Christ and your mission.

This study will highlight eleven areas. First, it will address the issue of your position in Christ. Second, it will address why God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit indwell you. Third, it will help us understand the meaning of, “You are the light of the world” (Matt 5:14). Fourth, it will explore the meaning of “You are the salt of the earth” (Matt 5:13). Fifth, it will examine a critical and so often ignored passage of Scripture, “You are our letter” (2 Cor. 3:2). Sixth, we will discover what the apostle Paul means when he said, “We are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (2 Cor. 2:15). Seventh, it goes on to describe the believer as an emblem of God’s love. Eighth, it develops the idea of the Christian as a banner of peace—individually and nationally. And ninth, this study will explain the concept of the Christian as a vessel of blessing. These topics and more will be covered in our study. So we ask, who are you?

Who Am I?

No. 1 - You Are In Christ

Your position in Christ makes you a new creature, a child of God, a co-heir with Christ. “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17). The apostle Paul tells us that, as God’s children, we are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). Stop and think for a moment about the fact that you are a co-heir of the God of the universe with His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. You share in Christ’s wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and much more (1 Cor. 1:30).

Your identity as a child of God accords you “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). This means, heaven has unleashed every blessing on you. Understanding that you are the object of God’s “every spiritual blessing” because of your position in Christ will motivate you to take your spiritual life seriously.

Those who are in Christ bear the name Christian. In many cultures, names have great importance and meaning. What does the name Christian signify and where did it come from?

A Christian

The word “Christian” has been used superficially in modern day Christianity. It was coined not by followers of Jesus Christ, but by the pagans, the unsaved. It comes from the Greek word *Christianos*, meaning “follower of Christ.” It was used to distinguish the worshippers of Christ from the worshippers of Caesar. In the first century AD, the word Christian was used as a term of derision.² But those called by that name came to favor it because of its meaning.

As the Gentiles in Antioch observed the followers of Christ, they saw unity among them, and they saw how they cared for one another, “For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need” (Acts 4:34-35). As these pagans observed the daily lives of Christ’s followers, they saw how they extended love to those outside their domain and they recalled how Christ lived in His first advent. They remembered His love for everyone — how He had compassion on many who were physically oppressed and made them well. Having seen His followers with identical traits, they called them Christians — those who act like Christ. Are you living an authentic Christian life? Please do not brush this question aside, the answer weighs heavily on your blessing both now and for all eternity.

Who are you?

No. 2 - You Are A Temple Of God

You are important to God; in fact, you are a very important person (V.I.P.). You may look ordinary, but you are not. You are the temple of the living God, constructed by the Holy Spirit at the point of faith (2 Cor. 6:16). Do not allow Satan to fool you — lying to you that you are nobody. On the contrary, you are special to God. “You are the apple of His eye” (Zech. 2:8).

Because many Christians have no idea what it means that their bodies are God’s temple, they live with no proper regard for God. This lack of understanding was the primary reason the Corinthian church failed miserably in their spiritual life. Their colossal failure prompted the apostle Paul to ask a daunting question, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16).

The Significance of the Temple

The temple is a meeting place between a Holy God and man. It’s a place of worship (2 Chron. 7:3). What makes a temple meaningful is God’s presence; it’s God’s dwelling place. There are two types of biblical temples: the Old Testament temples built with hands and the New Testament temple, the body of every believer, built by the Holy Spirit.

Solomon’s Temple

Solomon’s temple was destroyed by the Babylonians and rebuilt thereafter. In Solomon’s temple, there was an inner sanctuary called the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was placed. God dwelled in the Holy of Holies between the two cherubim that sat on either end of the Ark of the Covenant (1 Sam. 4:4). After Solomon dedicated the temple, “...the glory of the Lord filled the Lord’s house” (2 Chron. 7:2). God’s presence symbolized peace, protection, provision, guidance, and abundant blessing for His people, Israel.

Under the Law of the Old Testament, the temple is the only acceptable place of worship. When Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law, it changed the way worship was conducted. “An hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem [where the temple was located], shall you worship the Father...the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth” (John 4:21, 23-24).

A Human Temple

Pentecost brought a change in God's program. He relocated His dwelling place and made the body of every believer His abode. "You are the temple of the Living God" (2 Cor. 6:16). God desires your worship therefore your soul must be set apart unto God and kept holy. He commands us, "Do not touch what is unclean" (2 Cor. 6:17). We can maintain holiness by confessing our sins when we are aware of them (1 John 1:9).

There can be no external worship of God with other believers until there's an inner worship of Him. On the other hand, there can be no inner worship until the holy of holies — the soul — is set apart by the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

You are the link between God and the world. He wants to manifest His glory to the world through you. "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

Who are you?

No. 3 - You Are The Light Of the World

"I am the light of the world: he who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). In Matthew 5:14, Jesus declares, "You are the light of the world." What does He mean? He simply means that you are His light bearer. He is the Light; He shines through you. "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). The apostle Paul clarifies, "Now all these things are from God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18).

Some time ago I went on a missionary trip to a remote town in Africa. The electricity there stays off more than it stays on. One night while we were eating dinner in a family's house the electricity suddenly went off. There was total darkness; we could not see at all, let alone find our dishes. Eating was forced to a halt. Then, someone called for light, and a kerosene lamp was brought. A cheer went up, and we all resumed our dinner.

Your duty is to give light. Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good work and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:16). If there's darkness in your home, community, and nation, it's because you have failed to allow God's light to shine through you. It's forgivable when unbelievers blame the government, politicians, and even their president or prime minister for their national dilemma, but it's inconceivable when believers join in. Believers are the light of the world; government is not. What happens if one fails to allow the Lord to shine through them? God gets their attention by sending discipline.

Divine Discipline

Discipline is God's way of correcting His children. "What son is there whom his father does not discipline?" (Heb. 12:7). None. "God disciplines us for our good" (v. 10).

The Lord commanded the disciples to take the gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and beyond (Acts 1:8). They received the Holy Spirit but were reluctant to go. God's response was dramatic; He orchestrated persecution to force them to move. "On that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria...those who were scattered went about preaching the gospel" (Acts 8:1, 4).

Discipline comes in three increments, warning, intensive and, if unchecked, finally ends in destruction of the body.

• Warning Discipline

God sends a warning to alert you that you are not honoring His temple. "For this reason many of you are weak" (1 Cor. 11:30). The weakness experienced by the Corinthian church is warning discipline. If Christians ignore the warning, God intensifies the discipline.

• Intensive Discipline

God turns up the heat. The "heat" could be health issues, financial problems, or adversities of any kind. This is God's last chance to get the believer to restore His temple. If all warning is ignored, God calls the believer home (1 John 5:16).

• Destruction of the Body

"A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy" (Prov. 29:1). The apostle Paul said it this way, "For this reason many among you are weak [warning] and sick [intensive] and a good number sleep [destruction of the body]" (1 Cor. 11:30). God made you His temple; you cannot take this lightly without paying a heavy price. "If a man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are" (1 Cor. 3:17). God is gracious. The believer who suffers the "sin unto death" (1 John 5:16) will still be in heaven. His body is destroyed, "but he himself shall be saved" (1 Cor. 3:15).

God means business. You are the link between Him and the world. He wants to manifest Himself to the world through you. Will you allow Him to do so?

Who are you?

No. 4 - You Are the Salt of the Earth

We live in a tasteless, decaying world. But salt can remedy this with two of its essential properties: adding taste and preserving. And God has made you salt!

Taste

David sang, “O taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8). That is an invitation to one who had not tasted God’s goodness. But how can the person taste an invisible God? Through you, the individual tastes the goodness that is stored in God and deposited in you, the temple of God. The news gets better. Through you, your spouse, children, neighbors, co-workers, and school mates taste grace, compassion, love, kindness and mercy. “You are the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13).

When I was a young boy I was eating a meal with my many brothers and sisters. We sat in a big circle around the large bowl of soup, but it was tasteless — no salt. One of my sisters called for salt, and our brother ran into the kitchen and grabbed a pinch of what he thought to be salt and put it in the soup. But the soup tasted the same. My sister called for more salt. He ran in again, grabbing a handful. The soup was still tasteless. My sister, now exasperated, yelled “Bring me the plate!” He brought a plate of what he thought to be salt. My sister took a pinch and tasted it. All eyes were on her for the verdict. She shook her head and said, “This is corn starch!” That explained the unchanged taste.

The Lord is emphatic when He says, “If the salt has become tasteless...it is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men” (Matt 5:13). What kind of salt are you?

Preservation

As salt, your spiritual life is a preservative for keeping the world from moral decay. Righteousness keeps evil in check. When righteousness skyrockets, evil spirals down. On the other hand, when righteousness spirals down, evil skyrockets. “Righteousness exalts a nation” (Prov. 14:34). It makes no sense for you as a Christian to be blaming the world for its moral decay. If you, as the salt of the earth, fail to preserve it through your spiritual life, it will decay. This invites discipline from the supreme court of heaven. When believers are disciplined, the nation shares in it. You are the light, you are the salt. The nation is neither; it depends on you for both its light and taste. You see, your personal stand for morality and righteousness can bless and preserve you, your family, community and the nation at large. “When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices...By the blessing of the upright, a city is exalted. But by the mouth of the

wicked [carnal believers] it is torn down” (Prov. 11:10-11). Is your spiritual life contributing to building up or tearing down your nation?

Who are you?

No. 5 - You are the Fifth Gospel

Everyone reads you. “You are our letter known and read by all men” (2 Cor. 3:2). Many are too busy to read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but they are not too busy to read you. Can you recall anyone who may have been turned off to the gospel of Jesus Christ because of you? A preacher once said, “Our life brings people to Christ or it repels them.” The Apostle Paul exemplified this truth. He was flogged Roman style — with thirty-nine strokes — and jailed (Acts 16:23).

By law, the Roman authority should not have flogged the apostle Paul, for he was a Roman citizen. Even so he was not complaining in the prison. Rather, Paul and Silas were immersed in the pool of joy, “praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:25). Their joy was so contagious that the prisoners were drawn to them. The prisoners read Paul, he was the fifth gospel.

God miraculously opened the prison gate and caused the chains to fall off their hands. Paul and the others refused to escape (Acts 16:26-27). Paul and Silas’ integrity affected the other prisoners.

When the jailer wanted “to kill himself supposing that the prisoners had escaped...Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Do yourself no harm for we are all here’” (Acts 16:28).

The apostle Paul and Silas’ integrity, love, peace, and joy in suffering drew the jailer to Christ. He asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (v. 30). The apostle’s response was simply “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (v. 31).

You cannot tell others about God’s goodness, grace, mercy, kindness, and love when they do not detect these marvelous elements in your life. We are to model Christ to others just as Paul, Silas, and Timothy did when they offered themselves as examples for the Thessalonians and for us, saying we “offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example (2 Thes. 3:9).

The apostle Peter understood the importance of demonstrating Christ to others. He said, “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” (1 Peter 2:12 NIV).

Your life is the best method for explaining God's Word and has the most impact. Instead of explaining love with Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, demonstrate love! A poor needy person may have a hard time understanding Greek and Hebrew as they relate to love, but they will readily understand practical love. You are the fifth gospel. Everyone reads you daily.

The Gospel According to You

There's a sweet old story translated for me,
But writ in the long, long ago—
The Gospel according to Mark, Luke, and John
Of Christ and His mission below.

You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day,
By deed that you do, by words that you say.
Men read what you write, whether faithless or true,
Say, what is the gospel according to you?

Men read and admire the gospel of Christ,
With its love so unfailing and true;
But what do they say, and what do they think
Of the gospel according to you?

'Tis a wonderful story, the gospel of love,
As it shines in the Christ-life divine,
And oh, that its truth might be told again
In the story of your life and mine!

Unselfish mirrors in every scene,
Love blossoms on every sod,
And back from its vision the heart comes to tell
The wonderful goodness of God.

You are writing each day a letter to men;
Take care that the writing is true.
'Tis the only gospel some men will read,
That gospel according to you.

~Author Unknown~

Who are you?

No. 6 - You are Christ's Fragrance

You are special — “a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9), an epistle of Christ (2 Cor. 3:2), and “a fragrance of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:15). You are the vessel; Christ is the fragrance. Through you He permeates His scent “among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (v. 2:15).

The apostle John recalls Mary Magdalene's expression of love: “Mary therefore took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus” (John 12:3). Immediately, the “house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume” (v. 12:3). The price of a pound of pure nard, at that time, was equivalent to almost one year's wages. (John 12: 6, Matt 20:2). What's the price of Christ's fragrance? Priceless! Wherever you are in the company of other people, you should fill the environment with the “fragrance of Christ.” You should leave them wondering and asking, “What kind of fragrance are you wearing?” This is what it means to be “an ambassador for Christ” (2 Cor. 5:20). People should smell the scent of heaven when they are around you.

Have you ever been around someone who wore a fragrance that smelled so bad it left you gasping? Once I was in an elevator with someone whose perfume was so bad, I was hoping the person would get off at the next floor because their fragrance left me choking, searching for fresh air. I am sure you have been around such people too. What kind of perfume are you? Are you a kind that everyone wants to draw closer to or one that leaves people gasping for fresh air? Your answer is a matter between you and your Savior who gave all for you.

Who are you?

No. 7 - You are an Emblem of

Christ's Love

Agape love sets Christians apart from the rest of the world. It is a unique love. “God is love” (1 John 4:8). God has elected to demonstrate His unsurpassed love to mankind through you.³ It explains His indwelling of you. He manifests His love through His Spirit: “the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love” (Gal. 5:22). The Spirit is ever ready to produce agape love, an awesome love that only God can produce. “Love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples” (John 13:35). Let me put it this way: if you are around people for an extended period of time and they don't figure out that you are a Christian, maybe you are not living as an authentic one. More than likely, you are not serious about your spiritual life, which may invite the wake up call of discipline.

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent [change of mind] and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lamp stand out of its place unless you repent” (Rev. 2:5). Don’t wait until He visits you with discipline. I urge you to have a change of mind if you are not living the life of Christ.

Who are you?

No. 8 - You are the Banner of Peace

The world desperately yearns for a taste of peace. It cannot experience peace through anything outside of Christ. The United Nations cannot bring about true peace; only God can and will bring it about.

Christians at large seem to have forgotten the impact of Christianity. Wherever Christianity stands in its purest form, it brings about peace. There cannot be external peace until there is inner peace, which comes through new birth. “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). You are God’s banner of peace because of who you are in Christ. “Christ in you the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). The “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6) indwells you. This means, if you live like a Christian, God will grant you and those around you relative peace. “When a man’s ways are pleasing to the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov. 16:7). This was true of King Jehoshaphat who “sought the God of his fathers, [and] followed His commandments” (2 Chr. 17:4). The result of his spiritual life was astounding: “Now the dread of the Lord was on all the kingdoms of the lands which were around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat” (2 Chron. 17:10). God keeps His Word.

Practical Christianity does bring benefits. It was true of the early church: “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:31). Dr. Spiros Zodhiates confirmed this phenomenal truth of Christians enjoying peace: “There were no empire-wide persecutions of Christians until the brutal one under Decius (AD 249-51).”⁴ This does not mean there were no local persecutions; there were. This does not mean the early Christians were free from suffering since God uses suffering to mature His children (Heb. 5:8-9).

God grants both inner peace and external peace to those whose spiritual walk is pleasant to Him. But if you fail as in the time of the Old Testament (2 Chron. 15:3), God will respond in kind. “And in those times there was no peace to him who went out or came in, for many disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the land...for God troubled them with every kind of distress” (2 Chron. 15:5-6).

Your spiritual life matters — it is a source of blessing or discipline for you, your family, your community, and the nation.

Who are you?

No. 9 - You are a Funnel of

God's Blessing

Blessing from God must agree with His character. “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne” (Ps. 89:14). Since God’s righteousness and justice are two of His attributes they must factor into His blessings. God runs His blessing through Christ because He is the epitome of God’s righteousness. Jesus indwells you; consequently you share in His blessing, which is conditional upon your obeying His commandments. When you live a life that honors God, He pours His blessing through His Son to you. In turn, you become a funnel of blessing to your family, community, and nation. This is blessing by association. God blesses even undeserving people because of you.

Consider the blessing God bestowed upon Egypt and Israel through His servant Joseph.

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. The Lord was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the Lord was with him and how the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house on account of Joseph; thus the Lord’s blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field (Genesis 39:1-5).

You too can impact your family and your country. As a Christian, you should not underestimate the value of your spiritual life and its influence. “By the blessing of the righteous [you], a city is exalted” (Prov. 11:11). Your impact can be dramatic. So arise and live like a Christian.

Who are you?

No. 10 - You are a Royal Priest

What a privilege! Many Old Testament saints desired to be their own priests; wished they could offer their own sacrifices directly to God without an intermediary priest.

Who enjoys telling others of their worst sins? King Saul miscalculated when he offered a sacrifice, a function meant only for the priests (Num. 18:23). In desperation, because Samuel the prophet was late, Saul offered a sacrifice. He took for himself Samuel's divinely appointed duty. "So Saul said, 'Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.' And he offered the burnt offering" (1 Sam. 13:9). Big mistake! His sacrifice didn't ascend to heaven. Rather, Samuel rebuked him, "What have you done... you have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God....now your kingdom shall not endure" (vv. 11-14).

Imagine, one silly, costly mistake, that's all it took; Saul lost his kingdom. Only the Levites held the office of priesthood, no exceptions. They performed the temple sacrifices for themselves and others, "Only the Levites shall perform the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity" (Num. 18:23). If you were an Old Testament saint, you couldn't approach God without a priest; you couldn't offer your own sin offering directly to Him. A priest offered a prayer to God on your behalf.

What happened on the cross 2,000 years ago brought an immediate change. The moment Jesus Christ finished His work on the cross the curtain that covered the Holy of holies, which only the high priests were permitted to enter once a year, was ripped in half from top to bottom. "And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split" (Matt. 27:51). The Holy of holies was opened for all. The death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ brought a new era—abolishing the Old Testament specialized priesthood.

Now, you are a royal priest!

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). A royal priesthood? Is that a joke? No, not at all. You are a royal priest because you belong to the Royal Family of God. What a blessing. You don't need to confess your sin to a priest; you are a royal priest. "If we [Christians] confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

You have direct access. You don't need a priest to take you to God's throne room. An invitation has been issued to you: "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). One of the primary functions of a priest is the privilege of intercessory prayer for others (1 Tim. 2:4). It should be noted that we sin when we fail to make it a point of duty to pray for others, "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me

that *I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you*; but I will instruct you in the good and right way” (1 Sam. 12:23 emphasis added).

Who are you?

No. 11 - You are an Ambassador of Jesus Christ

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20).

Ambassador? Yes, you are a dignitary. You are God’s representative on earth, representing heaven in all its glory. Pinch yourself; it’s not a dream. Heaven has bestowed on you the highest office it can offer to God’s child on earth. As God’s ambassador, you have heaven’s maximum security. It places you in Christ, and Christ is in God (Col. 3:3); whatever happens to you happens first to Christ.

Added to heaven’s security, you have God’s unfailing provision. It’s the duty of a nation to provide sustenance for her ambassador to carry out his duty in a foreign land. God does the same for you. “Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Through Christ, God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing that heaven has to offer” (Eph. 1:3 GW). “In everything you were enriched in Him...you are not lacking” (1 Cor. 1:5, 7). The apostle Paul couldn’t have said it better, “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). God has equipped you—He Himself indwells you.

Think of it; an ambassador of a nation is a symbol of that country; he is the epitome of her glory. Wherever he goes he represents his nation. Through him, other nations and her people are exposed to his country. He’s there to display a vivid picture of what his country is about. He’s is the portrait of his nation. You are here on earth to display a vivid picture of the heavenly community. You are heaven’s portrait. You are here to herald the Kingdom of His Son Jesus Christ.

Those who are lost and destitute, who have no concept of a better place, no peace, no joy, watch you every day. Remember that. You are the custodian of eternal hope. Can they look at you and have a glimpse of God’s glory, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27)? He appeals, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). You are an ambassador for Christ, God is making an appeal through you (2 Cor. 5:20).

Remembering the Early Church

In wrapping up this brief exposition regarding our spiritual life, you and I need to pause. I mean pause. We need to re-evaluate our spiritual life. There is a reason God has kept us here. Recall our Lord praying, “I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:15-16).

Observe that the early church:

- 1) enjoyed peace
- 2) had spiritual growth
- 3) were under the shadow of the fear of the Lord
- 4) had the comfort of the Holy Spirit
- 5) increased continually

This is the type of church that the world desperately needs. Pray for revival. You and I can copy the footsteps of Christ; consequently, God can use us to alter the dynamics of our world. Lord, help us. When all is said and done, you and I should anticipate the Master’s welcoming address: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” May we join the apostle Paul in His victorious celebration:

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

The thought that we are not of the world consumed the early church. They had their eyes on Christ. They were acutely aware of the choices made by Jesus that brought God’s power and guidance to Him in His humanity. They wanted to be like Him and followed His example to study the Word, to depend on the Holy Spirit, and to commit to a lifestyle of prayer, and to love each other, just as He did.

• The Word

God’s Word was Christ’s guide for life and living; He made it His number one priority. “Man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4). When found in the temple, Jesus was “in the midst of teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions” (Luke 2:46). As He immersed Himself in God’s Word, “Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). Favor with God comes before favor with man. Rapport with God is

the basis for rapport with others. Following in Christ's footsteps, the early Christians "were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching" (Acts 2:42). Studying God's Word was their greatest delight.

• **Power of the Spirit**

The Lord in His incarnation was empowered by the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me" (Luke 4:18). He was "full of the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4:1). He stayed under the influential power of the Holy Spirit throughout His earthly ministry.

Jesus Christ knew the importance of the filling of the Holy Spirit. That's why He empowered His disciples: "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4). They understood their need and time after time, they were filled afresh (Acts 4:8, 31). The Holy Spirit's influential power provided boldness and the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22) necessary to bear spiritual fruit which explains the apostle Paul's command, "Be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). This is why it is so important to quickly confess our sins to restore fellowship with God and regain filling of the Holy Spirit.

• **Prayer**

Jesus Christ was a prayer warrior. He set the bar for His followers. He began His ministry with an allnight prayer vigil, "He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night praying to God. And when the day came He called his disciples to Him; and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles" (Luke 6:12-13). He backed the appointment of His apostles with intensive prayer.

He prayed before He engaged in ministry. "And in the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there" (Mark 1:35). He prayed after the day's ministry, "After He had sent the multitudes away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray" (Matt 14:23). The beheading of John the Baptist called for quiet time with the Father. "When Jesus heard it, He withdrew from there to a boat to a lonely place by himself ..." (Matt 14:13). In the time of crisis, He prayed, "Father, if You are willing remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). He demonstrated love by praying for those who crucified Him, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). That's the ultimate in prayer.

Impressed with His prayer lifestyle, His disciples came to Him and said, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). He taught them. They latched on to it. "They were continually devoting themselves to...prayer" (Acts 2:42) and encouraging us to do the same. Paul urged us: "Be imitators of me just as I am imitating Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Peter reminds

us: “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His footsteps” (1 Peter 2:21).

One who follows in Christ’s footsteps will leave footprints of glory in the sands of time. The disciples followed in His footsteps and turned their world upside down (Acts 17:6). Wherever they went, they changed the dynamics of the place. They introduced the lost and destitute to the Prince of Peace. They brought peace and hope to those without Christ and without hope eternal. “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit; it continued to increase” (Acts 9:31).

• **Loving One Another**

The beauty of Jesus was seen in the lives of His early followers. Jesus Christ cared for them; they too learned to care for one another, “for there was not a needy person among them” (Acts 4:34). They loved one another as Jesus Christ had loved them while He was with them (John 13:34-35). Their unique demonstration of Christ’s love set them apart from the community. As they mirrored the beauty of Jesus Christ in every respect, unbelievers were compelled to nickname them “Christians”—people who live like Christ.

Listen: you are not ordinary; you are extraordinary because of the One who indwells you. Don’t let the devil tell you otherwise. You are special. So, celebrate who you are with the words of the song, “Let the Beauty of Jesus be Seen.”⁵

Let the Beauty of Jesus be Seen

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,
All His wonderful passion and purity;
May His Spirit divine,
All my being refine,
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.

When your burden is heavy and hard to bear,
When your neighbors refuse all your load to share,
When you’re feeling so blue,
Don’t know just what to do,
Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in you.

When somebody has been so unkind to you,
Some word spoken that pierces you through and through.
Think how He was beguiled,
Spat upon and reviled;
Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in you.

From the dawn of the morning till close of day,
In example, in deeds, and in all you say,
Lay your gifts at His feet,
Ever strive to keep sweet,
Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in you.

Remember, to be a Christian is one thing, to live it out is quite another. Your family members, church members, friends, co-workers and others should be able to know you are a Christian without you telling them, or posting it on Facebook. To “Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,” as the song writer says, takes setting your mind on the things above (Col. 3:2), being transformed daily by the renewing of your mind, (Rom. 12:2) and setting your mind on the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5- 14). If you walk by the Spirit you will reflect the purity of Christ instead of giving in to your own weaknesses (Gal. 5:16).



“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3:20-21). Heavenly Father, revive us again in the name of your wonderful Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Endnotes

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² Wuest, Kenneth Samuel, *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, (1973) p. 19.

³ Onwubiko, Moses C., *Shower of Christian Love*, Jericho Press, Nashville, TN, 2012

⁴ Zodhiates, Spiros Editor, *Hebrew, Greek New Armenian Standard Bible*, Chattanooga, TN 1995, p 1644

⁵ Albert W.T. Osborne wrote the first stanza in 1916, George L. Johnson wrote Stanzas two through four in 1934. The music was composed by Tom M. Jones, published in 1927.

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