

KNOW WHO YOU ARE: THE PEOPLE OF GOD

1 PETER 02:09–10

Introduction

Know who you are. You are not a people who stumble over Christ, a people who question His claims and deity and refuse to believe Him. You are a people who believe Christ, a people who are building your lives upon the Foundation Stone of God's Son. You have taken your lives and laid them upon Him; you have entrusted your whole being into the keeping of Christ. Therefore, know who you are: you are the people of God, the people He is building to live with Him forever and ever. (See 1 Pet. 2:4-8.)

- I. Know what kind of people you are (v. 9).
- II. Know what your purpose is: to declare His praises (v. 9).
- III. Know what has happened to you (v. 10).

I. *1 Peter 02:09 A Chosen People, A Royal Priesthood*

Know what kind of people you are. Once you believe in God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, you become very, very special to God. You become special because you trust His Son. God the Father has only one Son...

- only one Son who has God's perfect nature, who is holy, righteous and pure, loving, kind and gentle just as God is.
- only one Son who came to earth to save men by dying for them by showing them how much God loves them.

God loves His Son so much that when a person trusts His Son — really believes and trusts Him — God will do anything for that person. The person becomes very, very special to God. God takes all believers and does four wonderful things for them.

1. Believers become a “chosen people” (*genos eklekton*). The Greek words actually mean a *chosen or elect race*. Peter takes the term from the Old Testament where God stated the same thing about Israel.

Isa. 43:20-21 “My people, my chosen. The people I formed for myself.”

The idea is that of a new race of people, a new species that differs entirely from the other races upon earth. This is a shocking statement to some people; nevertheless it is exactly what the Word of God claims. God is actually creating a new race of people upon earth. How? How can it be that believers from China, Russia, Asia, Africa, India, Europe, the Americas, the Islands, Canada and all the other nations of the world form a new race of people? By the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is changing people inwardly, not outwardly. He is not changing facial and skin features. These mean little; they are only superficial differences that change, age, perish, die and decay ever so rapidly.

God is changing people within their hearts and minds and lives, changing them where it really matters. God is implanting His divine nature within believers. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, God's divine nature is immediately implanted into his heart and life.

=> The person is *born again*.

John 3:3 *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

John 3:5-6 *Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."*

1 Pet 1:23 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

1 John 5:1 *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.*

=> The person receives a *renewed mind*.

Rom 12:2 *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Rom 8:5 *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.*

=> The person becomes a *new creation*.

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

Gal 6:15 *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.*

=> The person becomes a *new person, a new self*.

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

=> The person receives a *new spirit*.

Ezek 11:19 *I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.*

Rom 6:4 *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

Rom 7:6 *But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*

(See Eph. 4:17-19 for the New Race of People God is creating.)

2. Believers become a *royal priesthood*. To a person who has never given his life to Jesus Christ, God seems far away and off in outer space someplace. God just does not seem that concerned with human life. There is no personal relationship and little, if any, fellowship and communion with God. A day by day relationship that praises and honours God and brings one's needs to God and knows that God will meet one's needs — all this is missing to the person who has never committed his life to Christ. God seems untouchable and unreachable and out of range of man's day to day affairs. Without Jesus Christ a person just has no access and no closeness to God. This is the reason men have always felt the need to have priests, a body of people who would dedicate their lives to God and who would carry the needs of men before God. Men have felt the need to have a representative before God, some godly priest who could present his needs to God.

This is the glorious message of the gospel: when we receive Jesus Christ as our Saviour, God creates us into a royal priesthood. God makes a royal priest out of everyone of us. He gives us open access into His presence forever and ever. We can actually approach God anytime. In fact, God expects us to live in His presence — to fellowship, commune and walk in His presence all day every day.

Note the word “*royal*,” a royal priesthood. This simply means that we are priests of royalty, priests who belong to the Sovereign Majesty of the universe, the King of kings and Lord of lords. We are the priesthood of God Himself, the priests who rule and reign with Christ and who serve and worship God face to face, day by day, hour by hour and moment by moment. We are the priests who live and move and have our being in His presence, who walk and live in open communion with Him.

Thought 1. How many of us actually walk and live in the presence of God like this? How many know what it is to have an *unbroken communion* with God? How many know what it is to be praying always? May God convict our hearts and stir us to recommit our lives to prayer and communion — to praying always — to seeking an unbroken communion and fellowship with Him every moment of the twenty four hours of every day.

1 Pet 2:5 *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.*

Rev 1:6 *And has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

Rev 20:6 *Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.*

Exo 19:6 *“You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”*

John 15:7 *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

2 Cor 10:3-5 *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

Eph 6:18 *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

Phil 4:6-8 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.*

1 Th 5:17 *Pray continually.*

Heb 10:22 *Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

James 4:8 *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

3. Believers become a *holy nation*. This is a very meaningful title for believers. Just think about it: God is building a *new nation* of people. He is drawing people from all over the world, people from all the nations of the world, and creating a new nation. What is the nation? It is the *holy nation* of God. Remember: the word “holy” (hagios) means separated, set apart and different. Any person who is willing to separate from the sin and evil of this world and set his life apart unto God, God will take that person and make him a citizen of His holy nation. This is what holy means: to be different from

the world, from its sin, evil and death. It means to be separated from the evil life of the world and set apart to the holy life of God. The person who turns to God becomes a citizen of God's holy nation:

- => He serves the Sovereign Head of God's nation, even God Himself.
- => He obeys the laws of God's nation.
- => He is dedicated to follow the customs and lifestyle of God's nation.
- => He speaks up for and defends the nation of God.

Exo 19:6 “‘You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

Lev 11:45 *I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.*

Isa 35:8 *And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it.*

Luke 1:74-75 *To rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

2 Cor 7:1 *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

1 Th 3:13 *May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.*

1 Pet 1:16 *For it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

2 Pet 3:10-12 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.*

4. Believers become a “people who belong to God” (laos eis peripoiesin). The Greek means...
 - “a people for God's own possession” (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 98).
 - “the people to be His very own” (Charles B. Williams. *The New Testament in the Language of the People*. “The Four Translation New Testament.” New York, 1966).

- “a people saved to be His own” (William F. Beck. *The New Testament in the Language of Today*. “The Four Translation New Testament.” New York, 1966).

This is a most precious thought: that God makes us His very own people, a very special possession of His. Possession has the idea of value, of worth and preciousness. We are more precious to God than all the precious gems and treasures of the world. Possession also has the idea of provision, protection and security. We are God’s possession, His very special people; therefore, He will provide and protect us and make us secure in every sense of the word.

Exo 19:5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine.

Deu 14:2 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

Psa 100:3 Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Luke 1:17 “And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Acts 15:14 Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself.

Eph 1:13-14 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession — to the praise of his glory.

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

1 Pet 2:9 But 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.

Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

1 PETER 02:09 PRIEST, PRIESTHOOD, MEDIATOR

But 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. 1 Peter 02:09

A priest is a person who has access into God's presence, who represents men before God and God before men. He is a mediator between God and men: he offers sacrifices and makes prayer to God for men. The priest was always looked upon as the one person who could carry a man's case before God and God would accept the man because of the priest's intercession.

1. Throughout Israel's history the high priest was the chief priest who essentially had four functions.
 - => He supervised the other priests.
 - => He made a sin offering (Lev. 4).
 - => He offered a sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16).
 - => He was shown the will of God (Num. 27:21; Neh. 7:65).
2. The development of the priesthood seems to have been as follows: at first, individuals were priests (Gen. 4:3-4). Later on the head of a family, usually the father, began to serve as the priest (Gen. 8:20; 12:7; 13:8; 26:25; 31:54). When God created the nation Israel and gave Israel the law at Mount Sinai, He said that the nation was to be unto God "a kingdom of priests" (Exo. 19:6). But Israel failed to obey God's law. So God turned to one family of Israel, Aaron's family, and appointed them as the priests who were to minister to the nation (Exo. 28:1; Lev. 21:16-24).
3. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is said to be the perfect and eternal High Priest of God Himself (see Heb. 7:1-8:5; 10:1-18). The sacrifice which He offered to God for men was the death of Himself. What this means is this: Jesus Christ has made the perfect and eternal sacrifice to God. He died for our sins, paid the penalty and judgment of death for us. No other sacrifice by death has to be made. God has accepted Christ's sacrifice of Himself — eternally.

Before Christ the presence of God was said to dwell in the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle and Temple. Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place and that only once a year. It was separated from men by a veil. But when Christ died, Scripture says that the veil was torn from top to bottom *by an act of God* (Mt. 27:51). The torn veil is also said to be a symbol of Christ's body which was sacrificed or torn upon the cross (Heb. 10:20). All believers now have access to God through the death of Christ — into the holiest of holies right along with Christ (Heb. 10:19-22).

4. Since Christ, the individual believer has become his own priest before God; that is, he has the right to approach God for himself. As priest, the believer has two functions: he is to offer intercession and he is to offer sacrifices to God. He makes the following sacrifices to God.

=> He sacrifices his own body (Rom. 12:1; Ph. 2:17; Tim. 4:6; Jas. 1:27; 1 Jn. 3:16).

=> He sacrifices praise to God continually (Heb. 13:15; cp. Exo. 25:22).

=> He sacrifices his substance (Rom. 12:13; Gal. 6:6, 10; Tit. 3:14; Heb. 13:2, 16; 3 Jn. 5-8).

=> He sacrifices his service “to do good” (Heb. 13:16). □

II. *1 Peter 02:09 Believer's Purpose*

Know what your purpose is. Why does God do so much for believers? There is one supreme reason:

1 Pet 2:9b That you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

The statement “that you may declare” (*hopos exaggeilete*) means to speak forth; to tell out; to publish abroad; to set forth. The word “praises” (*aretas*) means virtues, excellencies, and the supreme and eminent qualities of God (Alan Stibbs, *The First Epistle General of Peter*: “The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” p. 104). The very task of the believer is to witness for God, to share the glorious message of God. What is that message? Note the verse: “the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.” The message that we are to share is the glorious message of salvation. God will deliver man out of darkness into the light. This is what He has done for believers. Therefore, we are to proclaim the glorious truth that God has saved us through the Light of the world, through Jesus Christ Himself. He has saved us out of the darkness of sin and death and delivered us into the light of eternity. We shall live forever. We are to praise God, proclaim the glorious message of His wonderful light or salvation.

Mark 16:15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

2 Cor 4:13 It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.

2 Cor 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 4:20 “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

Psa 66:16 Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.

Isa 63:7 I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us — yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

Mal 3:16 Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.

III. 1 Peter 02:10 Believers, The People of God

Know what has happened to you. Two great facts about believers are covered in this verse.

1. In the past believers were not a people, but now they have been made into the people of God. This is striking language. What does it mean *not to be a people*? Are unbelievers not a people? It means to be without purpose and significance in life; to be missing the very point of life, the very reason for living. It means God created man and gave man life. If man does not live that life, then he is not living, not in the real sense of living. He exists, but he is missing out on life, on what life really is. He is missing the very purpose, meaning and significance of life. He shall never fulfil, satisfy or complete the purpose of life.

But when a person comes to God’s Son, when a person enters the light of Christ, God saves him and gives him the light of life. He is given the light of life’s purpose, meaning and significance. He becomes a member of the people of God. He fulfils, satisfies and completes life and all that life is meant to be.

John 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Rom 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

2 Cor 6:17-18 “Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

Gal 4:4-6 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”

Deu 14:2 *For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.*

Hosea 11:1 *“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.”*

2. In the past believers had not received mercy, but now they have received mercy. Before we were saved we were like everyone else: we ignored, neglected, cursed, rebelled against and rejected God. We refused to change our lives and to cry out for the mercy of God: therefore, God could not have mercy upon us. But when we repented and turned to God, God had mercy upon us and saved us. He forgave our sin and neglect and brought us into His love and grace and gave us the glorious privilege of living with Him forever. God had mercy upon us and allowed us the glorious privilege of becoming a member of the people of God.

Eph 2:4-9 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Titus 3:5 *He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

Psa 103:17 *But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children.*

Lam 3:22-23 *Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

Joel 2:13 *Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.*

Micah 7:18 *Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. ■*