



Identity
Shane Philip
February 11-12, 2023

The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

In this our second week of World Gone Mad, Peter is writing to believers who are undergoing persecution because of their faith in Jesus. So, Peter provides a template on how to live in a culture that is becoming hostile to Christianity – one that is similar to ours today. So, he asks the question, “Who are you – what is your true **identity**?”

SCRIPTURE¹

Isaiah 40:30-31 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like *eagles*; they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not be faint.

1 Peter 5:4 And when the *chief* Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory.

1 Peter 2:1-2 Therefore, *rid yourselves* of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, *crave* pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may *grow up* in your salvation, now that you have *tasted* that the Lord is good.

1 Peter 2:4-5 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans 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.

1 Peter 2:7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the *cornerstone*.”

1 Peter 2:9-12 But you are a *chosen people*, a *royal priesthood*, a *holy nation*, *God’s special possession*, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the *people of God*; once you had not received mercy, but now you have *received mercy*. Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires which wage war against your soul. 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.

OBSERVATION

In Jerusalem, Solomon built a Temple to our God in the 900s B. C. It was destroyed when Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians invaded in 586 B. C., rebuilt by Zerubbabel 536 to 516 B.

¹ The NIV translation unless otherwise indicated.

C., rebuilt by King Herod the Great during his reign in the 100s B. C. and finally destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. In the years when the Temple existed, the Jewish people entered it to meet God. Peter tells us that, if people were going to meet God when the Temple was gone, it had to be through the people of God – and now through us.

QUESTION: In what ways do you meet God today?

Peter's writing was to Christians who had been scattered throughout the known world after persecution began in Jerusalem. When they chose Jesus, they were disowned by their families and friends and must have thought that everyone was against them, but Peter reminded them that God was for them and would never leave them.

QUESTION: When have you felt all alone with no one on your side? How did you cope with that situation? Which friends came along beside you?

APPLICATION

We are the true Temple of God because Christ lives within us. So, when someone asks us who we are, we don't need to answer with overwhelming feelings of inadequacy: Lack of self-worth, insecurity, failures, etc. We've been redeemed from all of that by the blood sacrifice of Jesus who has called us to live a holy life.

QUESTION: How have you been answering people who ask "Who are you?"

QUESTION: What changes would you need to make in order to live a holy life - more mature in Christ?

Jesus wants us to rid ourselves of all malice (deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander). This list is not all inclusive of the sin in our lives, but is representative of evil still tempting us every day. The Holy Spirit is happy to remind us and correct those things within us. Repentance is the first step in responding to His urgings and then we can replace them with godliness and maturity as we grow up in our faith. We can become a productive part of the spiritual house of God – His Temple for today. Jesus is the cornerstone of this spiritual Temple which is the firm foundation of all buildings. We are the living stones who are building a spiritual house where people can encounter God.

QUESTION: Who are the people encountering God through your ministry today?

God called us out of darkness into the light of Christ. We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy community and God's special possession who praise Him for our redemption. **This is our identity. 1) We are the ones whom God uses** to build on the foundation of Jesus so that people can encounter God; **2) He chose us** – but we have the freedom to choose whether or not we want to join Him on this journey; **3) We are a royal priesthood**, not of Aaron's kind, but because we represent people and directly advocate for them to God. We pray for them every day. We also represent God to people when we show others what God is like. This means we can't say whatever we like on social media, instead we must treat people who don't agree with us with gentleness and respect because we represent God to people who don't know Him; **4) We are a holy nation.** We've been set apart from this world gone mad just as believers who lived in the Roman Empire, a godless nation were; **5) We are God's possession.** We know that the worth of something is based on what someone is willing to pay for it, right? Well, Jesus gave His life for us - we belong to God. He paid the highest price possible to purchase our redemption and reconciliation back to God. It's all about belonging. We belong to a fellowship that has received God's mercy. In return He calls us to live holy lives so that others will see the difference God has

made in us. We are to live goodness and do goodness to others. It's difficult when we are stereotyped for our beliefs or mocked for them, but God is the only One we have to answer to – He is the One who gives us our identity. And it's not about the cars we drive or where we live or the clothes we wear, or what we did in the past, or whether we have chosen a political party, or what our sexual decision is - all of those things will leave us empty. Our true identity is found in Jesus alone, who He says we are, so He must be the central focus for everything we do or say every minute, hour, and day of our lives.

QUESTION: When will you be ready for that kind of commitment? What is your alternative?

When Jesus asked the Apostles, "Who do people say that I am?" some answers were John the Baptist or Elijah, but Peter, who made some bad decisions, was right when he said, "You are the Messiah, Son of the Living God!" His prior name had been Simon, but Jesus gave him a new identity – the Rock. This new identity flowed from Jesus' identity and ours does, too. We are living stones or building blocks chosen to raise up new believers in the faith. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we become living stones, chosen, forgiven, new creations, children of God, part of the Royal Priesthood, adopted, complete in Christ, more than conquerors and God's possessions. What a marvelous resume we have as Christians when we go all in for Jesus. How we live flows out of who we are. We are to be submitted to our Chief and His will, and are also Eagles who soar on wings of angels toward Heaven as we follow and focus our lives entirely on Him. Hallelujah!

QUESTION: If you work for a company today, what does your resume say? How would Jesus change it if you worked for Him instead?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us to rise up like eagles – to run and not grow weary – to walk and not be faint - as we commit ourselves wholly to You. In Jesus' name. Amen

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: In what ways do you meet God today?

QUESTION: When have you felt all alone with no one on your side? How did you cope with that situation? Which friends came along beside you?

QUESTION: How have you been answering people who ask "Who are you?"

QUESTION: What changes would you need to make in order to live a holy life - more mature in Christ?

QUESTION: Who are the people encountering God through your ministry today?

QUESTION: When will you be ready for that kind of commitment? What is your alternative?

QUESTION: If you work for a company today, what does your resume say? How would Jesus change it if you worked for Him instead?