

1 P E T E R

A VERSE BY VERSE STUDY THROUGH PETER'S EPISTLE

SESSION OBJECTIVE: 1 PETER 2:9-10

To understand how the church has become the people of God, and what our role is as such.

The Whole is Better Than the Parts

There is an identifiable phenomenon in nature called *synergy*. Synergy, by definition, is the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects. One example is that of the Zebra and a small bird called African Oxpeckers. Their relationship is not only symbiotic to some degree (both receive mutual benefits from the relationship), but synergistic in that both of them are better off together than separate. The Zebras provide a source of blood that the Oxpeckers feed off - 1. from the ticks on their bodies, and 2. from the wounds where the ticks have bitten them. The Oxpeckers offer a form of pest control, but they also produce a hissing sound whenever they're frightened, providing an alarm system for the Zebras that notifies them to move whenever the Oxpecker spots a predator nearby. The Oxpecker is given a greater level of protection as a result, as well. They are both greater together than they are individually on their own.

Coming from a primarily western perspective, it's difficult for us to commit to the idea of the church being a place of synergy, and yet this is what the New Testament routinely comes back to. Your identity does not reach its full potential until it is found within the community of faith in the church of Jesus Christ. You are uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit, and those gifts are always for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 14:12). The Apostle Paul envisions the body such that, "when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:28). In verses 9 and 10 of 1 Peter chapter

2, Peter calls us, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.” We have a corporate function; a group task. This week we will look at this identity a bit more closely.

Y'all!

Verse 9 begins with, “But you are,” which sounds like he is speaking to you, individually. However, the Greek tells a different story. He uses the Greek personal pronoun ὑμεῖς, which is the plural. He’s saying, “But you all are,” or much less properly, “But y’all are” (Texas wins, y’all). He’s speaking to the group, not the individual. This is commonplace in the New Testament. It is rare that we find commandments, encouragement, edifications, or exhortations to individuals. Usually, the apostolic witness is to the church as a whole. Below is a break down of the four roles that we are called to as the church.

A CHOSEN RACE

The first thing Peter calls us is, “a chosen race.” The word, “chosen,” is actually just the Greek word ἐκλεκτός (eklektos), which is the same word that Peter has already used a lot: “elect.” That they are, “elect exiles,” (1 Pet. 1:1) it should not surprise us to see this word. However, the idea of the church being, “a chosen race,” is unusual given Paul’s words in Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” However, what Peter is doing is not designating a national identity to the church, but using *typology*. The method being proposed is one called, “Typology.” Typology is a method developed from the Greek word, “tupos” (Heb 8:5, Rom 5:14), and it means, “type, copy, or pattern.” Typology suggests *that there are persons and/or events in the Old Testament that serve as patterns or types of something more definite in the New Testament*. You could say it this way: the Old Testament person or event is the shadow and the New Testament person or event is the substance. In this case, Peter is suggesting that Israel is the shadow of which the church is the substance.

The direct passage that Peter is pulling from is Exodus 19:5-6: “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.” Here, we find not one, but all of the descriptors. They are a chosen race from, “among the peoples.” They are a, “treasured possession.” They are a, “kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

This passage is significant because these are descriptors that uniquely describe Israel, and yet here they are being applied *to the church*. What we will find is that as the chosen people of God in the New Covenant, their roles seem to look the same, but are actually elevated to a greater level than Israel.

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

To understand the role of the priesthood requires more time than we have for this study. The Old Testament sees the Aaronic priesthood established in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8. Aaron, the brother of Moses, is also a descendant of Levi (Num. 26:55). Thus, when Aaron becomes the first high priest, the priesthood established is actually the Levitical priesthood for which the book of Leviticus was written. The priesthood was the highest calling (Lev. 21:10), a birthright for Levites, and their role was to carry out the day to day tasks of the Temple, with the high priest being the one who entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. They ministered to the people.

Now, the church is called a royal priesthood. If that is so, some questions need answering.

1. Who is the High Priest of our priesthood who makes atonement for sin?

Hebrews 4:14-15 gives us the answer: “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through

the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." Jesus is our great high priest. We, then, as His priesthood, offer up daily sacrifices of spiritual praise (Rom. 12:1).

2. Where is the temple?

1 Corinthians 3:16 says, "Do you not know that you are God's temple, and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" It makes sense for believers who are called priests to God to also be the temple in which God's Spirit dwells.

3. What is our responsibility?

The priesthood also has access to God. Because the priests in the Old Testament were mediators, they had privileged access to Yahweh to go before Him on behalf of others. In the same way, every Christian has access to the Father in Heaven because of the atonement made by our High Priest. This allows us to have fellowship with the Father. It's not that we don't believe we need a priest to go before God; it's that we are all priests before God. Our role is to, "proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9), and to do that we must be able to mediate the spiritually dead with God.

A HOLY NATION

The church is also called, "a holy nation." God said to Israel, "You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine" (Lev. 20:26). The Hebrew word for holy is שָׁדָד (qādošh), and it means, "set apart or separated and dedicated to God." The people of God in Israel were separated from the other nations, and thus are *made holy*. The church is not a nation, but a conglomerate of individuals from, "every tribe, every nation, and every tongue" (Rev. 7:9), but we are called to be set apart from the world. Paul wrote, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). Jesus said, "If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (Jn. 15:19). We are told to, "set our minds on the things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2). We are called to engage the world with the Gospel, but to remain unstained by it. To be altogether in a different category than non-Christians. This does not mean that we become unrelatable religious robots, but on the contrary, that our worldview and basis for every decision we make does not become compromised by worldly thought.

A PEOPLE FOR HIS OWN POSSESSION

Finally, the chief marker that distinguishes the church from any other organism is that we are, "a people for His own possession." Christ did not merely commission us; He purchased us with precious blood (1 Pet. 1:19). This is why Paul says, "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Our identity is not ultimately found in what we do, but in who we belong to.

Now and Then

One of the chief ways we live our lives with gratitude is by reflecting on the goodness of God to us, and verse 10 sums up an important aspect of it: "Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." At one time, we were without mercy and under condemnation, but now we are not. At one time we had no identity in Christ, but now we do. This reality should propel us individually and corporately to live with mercy and compassion on others who have not yet been redeemed.

Study Questions

Day One

- 1. Read 1 Peter 2:9. What does it mean that the church is a, "chosen race?" (Hint: See above notes)

- 2. Read Exodus 19:5-6. What parts of this passage does Peter apply to the church?

Day Two

- 1. Read 1 Peter 2:9. What does it mean that the church is a, "royal priesthood?" Who is our High Priest? What is our responsibility? (Hint: See above notes)

- 2. Read Romans 12:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 3:16. How do these passages illustrate the priesthood of every believer?

Day Three

- 1. Read 1 Peter 2:9. What does it mean that the church is a, "holy nation?"

- 2. Read Leviticus 20:26. How is Israel made holy in this passage? How has the church been made holy?

Day Four

- 1. Read 1 Peter 2:9. Why is our identity as, "a people for His own possession" so important? How does this ultimately set us apart from everyone else?

- 2. Read 1 Peter 2:10. When was the church, "not God's people?" What moment were we made into God's people?

Week 10 Discussion: Priesthood of Every Believer

One of the central convictions that we have as Christians at City On a Hill is the so-called, "priesthood of every believer." What this means is that, upon becoming a Christian and receiving the Holy Spirit, we are able

to go before God without an earthly representative to mediate for us. Christ is our mediator because He is our High Priest. Talk as a group about what this privileges us to do, and what it actually demands of us.

1. Icebreaker: When you hear the word *priest*, what do you think of and why?
2. Read Romans 12:1-2. How does the priesthood of all believers change the way you view worship?
3. How does the priesthood of all believers change the way you view prayer? That you are able to stand before God and have communion with Him, with Jesus as your mediator?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 3:16. How does your body being the temple of the Holy Spirit shape how you care for yourself? (Not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually as well)
5. How does the priesthood of all believers change the way you view evangelism?
6. How do you do life, “in the world,” but not, “of the world?”

Takeaways:

1. The church is a typological fulfillment of all that Israel was intended to be.
2. The Christian experience is meant to be understood primarily through the lens of *us* not *me*.

PRAYER REQUESTS: