

March 17, 2024

Would the True Church Please Stand Up?

The Church in the World Series

Text: Selected Scripture in 1 Peter

Introduction: A very popular game show in the late 50s, 60s, and 70s was *To Tell the Truth*. It ran twenty seasons during this time with over 3800 episodes being aired.

Although there were some variations in the rules over the years, certain basic aspects remained consistent throughout all versions of *To Tell the Truth*. Three challengers were introduced, all claiming to be the central character. The celebrity panelists then read along as the host read aloud a signed affidavit about the central character.

The panelists were each given opportunity to question the challengers. The central character was sworn to give truthful answers, and the impostors were permitted to lie and pretend to be the central character.

After questioning was complete, each member of the panel voted on which of the challengers he or she believed to be the central character, without consulting the other panelists. Any panelist who knew one of the challengers or had another unfair advantage was required to recuse or disqualify themselves. They would also sit out of the questioning.

Once the votes were in, the host asked, "Will the real *Howard Clompenheimer* please stand up?" The central character then would stand, often after some brief playful feinting and false starts among all three challengers.

Peter wanted the church to know who they truly were. He characterized the church so beautifully in this letter.

Would the True Church Please Stand Up?

I. Peter's Recipients of This Letter.

A. Pilgrims of the Dispersion. **1 Peter 1:1**

Pilgrims ~ strangers dispossessed in a land not their own.

The early Christian writing *The Epistle to Diognetus* gives the idea of what pilgrims are. *They inhabit the lands of their birth, but as temporary residents of it; they take their share of all responsibilities as citizens, and endure all disabilities as aliens. Every foreign land is their native land, and every native land a foreign land... they pass their days upon earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. (Cited in Barclay)*

Dispersion ~ Jews scattered throughout the world or aliens in the world, whether Jews or Gentiles (the Church). These Christians had been scattered as the Jews had by Babylonia. Jewish Christians or Gentile believers who had been influenced by Judaism clustered in little church groups.

B. Sojourners. **1 Peter 2:11**

Foreigners in a secular society whose citizenship was now found in heaven.

II. Peter's Description of the Church.

A. Born Again. **1 Peter 1:23**

Only those who through faith, belief, and confession have received a new spiritual birth are part of the church.

Attendance at church functions/services, membership, family heritage, knowledge about God and Jesus – these are not new birth, although they may bring someone to faith or be steps taken following conversion.

B. A Spiritual House. **1 Peter 2:5**

God is placing all believers into His family, integrating each one with others and into Christ's body. Read **Ephesians 2:19-22**

C. A Holy Priesthood. **1 Peter 2:5** (Royal Priesthood **2:9**)

The main privilege of a priest is access to God – what we have! Remind of our privilege and duty – **Hebrews 10:19-25**.

MacArthur's characteristics of priests (p. 1941-2):

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Elect. | 6. Expected to obey. |
| 2. Cleansed of sin. | 7. Honored the Word. |
| 3. Clothed for service. | 8. Walked with God. |
| 4. Anointed for service. | 9. Impacted sinners. |
| 5. Prepared for service. | 10. Messengers of God. |

A priesthood that is part of a kingdom (Christ's).

A day is coming when we will reign with Him.

D. A Chosen Generation/Race. **1 Peter 2:9**

Chosen by God to enter into His grace, mercy, and salvation.

First chose Abraham and his descendants – **Deut. 7:6-9**.

E. A Holy Nation. **1 Peter 2:9**

A reference from **Exodus 19:5-6**.

Although Israel once could have claimed this title, the Church now is privileged to rise to this calling.

F. His Own Special People. **1 Peter 2:9-10**

Old KJV ~ *Peculiar people* ~ God's own special possession.

The Jews were chosen by God through Abraham; the

Gentiles were invited into God's family with the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus.

The description of the Church is systematic and exhaustive. It is a race, and this suggests its life principle. It is a priesthood, and so has right of access to God. It is a nation, and so is under His government. It is a possession, and so is actually indwelt by Him. ~ Morgan

G. Stray Sheep Who Have Returned to the Shepherd.

1 Peter 2:25; 5:2

Isaiah 53:6 *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

H. Christians. **1 Peter 4:16**

Acts 11:26; 26:28 – At first a derisive term. Over time was embraced by His followers.

I. A Brotherhood in the World. **1 Peter 5:9**

The outlook is on the whole conflict of the saints. It is seen as one. No soul is fighting alone. Each one is at once supporting, and supported by, all the rest. ~ Morgan

III. Peter's Hope for the Church.

A. Obedient Children. **1 Peter 1:14**

Having repented and turned away from former sinful vices and behaviors.

Holiness in this section carries the idea of *apartness*.

The idea is that God is separate, different from His creation, both in His essential nature and in the perfection of His attributes. But instead of building a wall around His apartness, God calls us to come to Him and share His apartness. He says to us, "Be holy, for I am holy.

~ D. Guzik

B. Priests Offering Acceptable Spiritual Sacrifices.

1 Peter 2:5

Spiritual Sacrifices ~ God-honoring works done for God and for others.

C. Proclaimers of the God of Salvation. **1 Peter 2:9**

Proclaim ~ to tell something not otherwise known; could refer to personal testimonies of God's redemption in one's life.

D. Followers of Christ. **1 Peter 2:21**

Asking always, *What would Jesus do?*

E. Good Stewards of the Grace of God. **1 Peter 4:10**

Stewards ~ one responsible for another's resources.

We are His hands and feet.

So What? Does Peter's description of the Church describe you? If you are His child, then you are His church, and each title should describe you.

Are you living out this calling daily?

It is time for the true church to stand up in our world.

Striving to be obedient to God's Word, our works will be spiritual sacrifices to Him. As followers of Christ, we will be given opportunity to proclaim who God is and what he has done for us. We must realize that God has entrusted a great responsibility on His stewards.

Questions to Ponder Through the Week
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1. Read John 3:1-21. What do you learn about being *born again* from this conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus? How would you explain being *born again* to a friend who wants to understand your faith? How does 1 Peter 1:23 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-57 add to our understanding of being *born again*?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 3:9-16 and Ephesians 2:19-22 alongside 1 Peter 2:4-8. What do we learn about the *building* God is constructing for Himself? What gives this *building* stability?

3. Read Hebrews 10:19-25 alongside 1 Peter 2:5, 9. As a new priesthood, what encouragement does the author of Hebrews give to the Church? How do these things impact our relationship with God and with others in the Church? What can you do today to better assume this role in the Church?

4. The old King James version of the Bible translated 1 Peter 2:9 as *you are a peculiar people*. This word, *peculiar*, can be used to describe something or someone that “belongs exclusively to some person, group, or thing” or to refer to “a property or privilege belonging exclusively or characteristically to a person.” As believers we belong to God. How should that fact impact how we live in the world?

5. Read 1 Peter 4:10. What is a steward? What is your responsibility as a steward of God? Are there any ways in which you feel ill-equipped to serve in this capacity?

Sermon Topic for March 24:

Let's Be Goody Two Shoes! 1 Peter

Trusting you have been blessed as we have spent several weeks in 1 Peter. Read through this short letter one more time and mark all the verses that have the word *good* in them. You should find several. How will living life in a *good* way impact your world? What are God's expectations?