

A New Creation: Miraculous Supernatural Renewal Every Moment of Every Day!

Discover Your Spiritual Identity!

The Revelation of the Names and Titles God Has Given His People

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17, NKJV).

Salvation in this New Covenant era is not based on mere rehabilitation; it is an act of recreation. It is not achieved through human effort; it is received as a gift of God. It is not accomplished by just striving to be a better person; it is accepted by “faith” (Eph. 2:8).

Titus 3:5 celebrates this truth in wonderful words:

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

“Regeneration” means rebirth. “Renewing” means to be made brand new all over again. These complementary acts of a loving Creator do not result from just following religious rules or participating in rituals. Though repentance and baptism are necessary steps, these would be utterly insufficient were they not followed by supernatural transformation.

This superb insight dominated Paul’s teaching. Going against the grain of some believers who were still gravitating toward the law, he dared to insist:

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision

means anything, but a new creation" (Galatians 6:15, MEV).

He understood that all our religious rituals, traditions, and doctrines pale in comparison to the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

One Old Testament prophet enthusiastically looked forward to this New Covenant era by declaring an amazing oracle:

"Also, I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezek. 36:26-27).

So, in this age of grace, God doesn't just fix damaged hearts; He makes them brand new. Jesus was referencing this mystery when He told Nicodemus, "You must be born again!" (John 3:7). The Greek word translated "again" in that passage is *anōthen*, which literally means from above. So, to be "born again" is to be "born from above." When we were born the first time, a new physical body came forth from "below," out of our mother's womb. When we were "born again," a new spirit entered into us from "above"—from the very heart of God. This regenerated spirit is described in Ephesians 4:24 (NKJV) as:

"the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

So, the very moment the blood of Jesus washes our hearts clean, we are reconciled to God, made holy and reckoned as righteous in the sight of heaven. How righteous, you might ask? The answer is astounding:

"God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21, MEV).

We do not just appear as righteous as the firstborn Son in the

eyes of the Father (“imputed righteousness”). We have received an infusion of righteousness as a gift (“imparted righteousness”). In fact, the Scripture above declares we become the very “righteousness of God.” How should this impact our hearts and minds? No more guilt. No more shame. No more condemnation. And if we worshipfully and gratefully respond as we should, no more carnality and worldliness.

If you are a born-again believer, to fully function in this new and wonderful status, you must be “renewed in the spirit of your mind” and “renewed in knowledge” (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:10). Once that happens, the renewed, regenerated spirit gains ascendancy and the flesh part is brought under subjection. Then, instead of being focused on what we shouldn’t do, we become focused on what we should do. Instead of being predominantly “sin-conscious,” we become “God-conscious” (aware that God is with us, God is in us, God is for us, and He has made us worthy).

Oh, we may falter from time to time, but through humility and faith, this status of total victory is constantly being reinstated:

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

No wonder “no weapon” formed against us shall prosper (Isa. 54:17).

To explore this wonderful subject more deeply, listen to a past episode of Mike Shreve’s weekly podcast called, “Discover Your Spiritual Identity” on our calling to be “A New Creation.” {eoa}

*A product of the Jesus Movement Era, **Mike Shreve** has traveled evangelistically in the United States and overseas since 1970 with an emphasis on healing and the prophetic. His primary biblical teaching for over 35 years has been the spiritual*

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The Blessed of the Father: Blessing Others is the Key to Being Blessed, Now and Forevermore

Discover Your Spiritual Identity!

The Revelation of the Names and Titles God Has Given His People

“Then the King will say to those at His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world’ (Matt. 25:34, MEV).

The word “blessed” means supremely happy, enriched with benefits, spiritually prosperous and highly favored. It is

also used to describe someone with character traits God considers the highest expressions of goodness.

Bible words translated “blessed” are also translated “happy” – because blessedness and happiness go together.

Such was the spiritual atmosphere of the world at its start. After creating the creatures of the sky and sea, “God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply’” (Gen. 1:22). Then, having made Adam and Eve, “God blessed them, and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it’” (Gen. 1:28).

So, the power of procreation – the privilege of giving life and existence to offspring – was the first and most powerful sign of blessedness. This is true spiritually now. The most “blessed” Christians are those who reproduce faith in others and bring them into the experience of spiritual rebirth.

From the start, the blessing of God was released by the spoken word (a lesson we need to learn). However, after Adam and Eve transgressed, God introduced “the curse” (also by the spoken word) (see Genesis 3:14-19). Since that day, every human being has entered this world in a cursed state – conceived in iniquity, born in sin, spiritually stained, separated from the Creator and stalked by death (see Psalm 51:5, Romans 5:12). Nevertheless, God’s plan from the start was to create a pathway back to blessedness.

The Return Path Unveiled

Humanity arrived at a spiritual milestone, centuries later, when after the flood, “God blessed Noah and his sons” (Gen. 9:1). Then after ten generations, God revealed Himself to a man named Abram, saying:

“Go from your country, your family, and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great, so that you

will be a blessing . . . And in you all families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

By obeying God's call, Abram (who was "blessed . . . in all things") became the catalyst for the release of God's blessing of God into all the world (Gen. 24:1). When his descendants entered the Land of Promise, thousands stood on the slopes of Mount Gerizim shouting "Amen" to blessings God promised would "overtake" Israel if they strictly adhered to the commandments of the law. This former model failed, though, because it depended too much on human performance. But then the Messiah came.

The Superiority of the New Covenant

The Old Testament may have ended with the word "curse" but Jesus' first main sermon in the New Testament began with the word "blessed":

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3).

In other words, supremely happy, enriched with benefits and highly favored of God are those who admit their spiritual bankruptcy "in Adam" and their need of a Savior. Such choice persons inherit God's kingdom (all that God has and all that God is). In a sense, they go from nothing to everything simply because they honestly confess their great need before God!

During His life on earth, the Messiah opened many gateways to blessedness. But through His death, the door swung open even farther. Galatians 3:13-14 explains:

"Christ . . . redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

After rising from the dead and ascending to heaven, on

Pentecost, Jesus sent forth the Holy Spirit into the upper room where the disciples were waiting. Malachi's prophecy was then fulfilled as God opened the windows of heaven and poured out such an overflow of His blessing there simply wasn't "room enough" in Israel to contain it (see Malachi 3:10). It burst through the walls of Judaism and gushed into all the world.

Now we who are born again need not beg, for God already has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). We possess these blessings – God's love, peace, joy, authority, wisdom, victory and much more – by holding "fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful who promised)" (Heb. 10:23, KJV).

More Blessed to Give

As we reach out to claim our inheritance, though, we need to remember heaven's mindset that it is "more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). What a mystery it is that in "The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats" (our foundation scripture), the status of being "the blessed of the Father" was not imparted because of what believers received but what they gave away (like food to the hungry and clothes to the naked) (See Matthew 25:31-46.)

We need to remind ourselves of this often and look for opportunities to bless others in significant ways that the real status of blessedness might be established in our lives – for time and eternity.

To explore this wonderful subject more deeply, listen to a past episode of Mike Shreve's weekly podcast called, "Discover Your Spiritual Identity"—on our call to be "The Blessed of the Father." {eoa}

*A product of the Jesus Movement Era, **Mike Shreve** has traveled evangelistically in the United States and overseas since 1970 with an emphasis on healing and the prophetic. His primary biblical teaching for over 35 years has been the spiritual*

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True Worshipers: Satisfying God's Thirst While He Satisfies Ours

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“Yet the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father seeks such to worship Him” (John 4:23, MEV).

This world is a place of seeking—a place where the thirsty seek after God and a place where God seeks after the thirsty. Yes, the Father seeks “true worshippers” who are able to fulfill His desire for sweet communion and meaningful

relationship. When Jesus arrived in Samaria, He initiated a conversation with a lowly woman near a well.

He began with the simple request, "Give me to drink" (John 4:7, KJV). Surprised that a Jew would even speak to a Samaritan, her eyes mirrored wonder. If she had only known the irony of His statement—for "by Him all things were created," including every ocean, river, lake, pond and drop of rain that falls from the sky (Col. 1:16, MEV). So He really didn't need her little bucket of water. He could have effortlessly produced His own. But He wanted to see her willingness so He continued:

"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water". . ."Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water that I shall give him will become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life" (Jn. 4:10, 13-14).

Ponder Jesus' words carefully. What is this "living water" that first flows into us to quench our spiritual thirst, then flows out of us to quench God's thirst?

Natural water (a staple of life) is made up of two elements: H₂O (two parts hydrogen, one part oxygen). "Living water" (a spiritual staple of life) is also made of two elements. Both the Word and the Spirit are represented by water in Scripture (see Isaiah 55:10, Ephesians 5:26, John 7:37-39). Fusing these together, "living water" could be described as WORD2SPIRIT—two parts Word (Old Testament and New Testament) and one part Spirit. By these two influences, God quenches our thirst for spiritual reality. Then both of them stream back to Him when we worship. We pour out Spirit-unctioned praise and confess His Word as we send up our faith-filled petitions.

Jesus revealed this mystery to the woman at the well when He

said:

“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

Let’s go a little deeper and discover what this dual requirement means fully.

Worshipping “in spirit”—Notice the word “spirit” is spelled with a small letter “s.” It doesn’t refer to God’s “Spirit” but rather the regenerated “spirit” of a born-again believer. Until Jesus dwells within us, our spirits are “dead in . . . trespasses and sins,” incapable of true worship (Eph. 2:1). Even though our spirits have a threefold function (communion with God, revelation from God and conscience), the first two are non-functional prior to salvation. The third (conscience) is barely functional. However, when we are saved, God puts a “new spirit” in us with the capacity of offering true worship to God (worship that is mingled with His Spirit and thus, acceptable to Him) (Ezk. 11:19).

Worshipping “in truth”—There are seven primary ways that we “worship in truth”:

(1) Worshipping with honesty (acknowledging sin)—Ps. 51:3

(2) Worshipping with sincerity (with passion)—Ps. 9:1

(3) Worshipping with the revelation of God’s true nature—Exod. 34:14, John 4:22

(4) Worshipping with correct methods—Ps. 47:1; 100:1-5, Lam. 3:41

(5) Worshipping by learning and comprehending the truth—2 Tim. 2:15

(6) Worshipping by applying truth to every area of our lives—Ps. 86:11-12

(7) Worshipping “in Christ” (abiding in the One who said, “I am . . . the truth”—John. 14:6)

Other translations of our highlighted verse refer to God’s people as “real worshippers” and “genuine worshippers” (NEB, Ber). Of all goals in life, this is one of the most important—to be real, to be genuine with the Almighty God. Those who are will be like a devoted bride-to-be who looks for every opportunity to speak affectionately to her beloved Bridegroom. As John Wesley prayerfully requested:

“Let every act of worship be, like our espousals Lord to thee.”

Oh, by the way, God doesn’t really need our “buckets of worship” either—since He is surrounded by a multitude of angels that ceaselessly praise His name—but He is still saying to each one of us, “Give Me to drink.” Are you willing to respond to Him today and to live a life of passionate praise?

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You Are “God’s Beloved”: Just as Loved of the Father as Jesus, the Firstborn Son

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The Revelation of the Names and Titles God Has Given His People

“As He says also in Hosea, ‘I will call them My people, who were not My people; and her BELOVED, who was not beloved’” (Rom. 9:25, NKJV)

Hosea, the prophet, spoke prophetically over Israel by means of a strange, though inspired, dramatic act. During a time when the nation had plunged into apostasy, he was directed by God to marry a whorish woman named Gomer (representing the spiritual “whorishness” of Israel at that time). Hosea had three children by Gomer: first, Jezreel (a son), then Lo-ruhamah (a daughter), then Lo-ammi (another son). Their names were God-inspired prophecies declaring the serious consequences that would soon befall the northern kingdom of Israel because of idolatry and rampant sin.

- Jezreel means scattering, as in the scattering of seed—for they were soon to be strewn like seed throughout the world.
- Lo-ruhamah means not having obtained mercy—for God was no longer going to pour out patience and pity on them.
- Lo-ammi means not My people—for in essence, God was saying, “We are no longer in a special relationship; you no longer belong to Me.”

Soon after these “acted-out-prophecies,” the Israelites were crushed by the Assyrian army and carried into captivity. Thankfully, amid such grievous darkness, a bright light was still shining. Hosea also foretold the coming of a glorious future time when the children of Israel (the northern kingdom of ten tribes) and the children of Judah (the southern kingdom of two tribes) would be reunited under “one head” (Hos. 1:11).

That ancient oracle was fulfilled when the Messiah came but in far greater measure than expected. For He conquered the grave and ascended to heaven to become “the head,” not only of Israel and Judah but of all the Gentiles who would yet place their trust in Him (Eph. 1:22). In this New Covenant era, people of all races and tongues who repent and believe are “married . . . to him who has been raised from the dead”—becoming a part of His beloved eternal bride (Rom. 7:4, NKJV; see Ephesians 5:23).

God revealed the beauty of this era through Hosea’s words, especially in the following three verses:

“And it shall be, in that day,” says the Lord, “That you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer call Me ‘My Master’” (Hos. 2:16).

“I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy” (Hos. 2:19).

“Then . . . I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ And they shall say, ‘You are my God!’” (Hos. 2:23).

About eight centuries later, Paul referred to this last passage (Hos. 2:23) in his epistle to the Romans, yet enhanced its meaning with additional wording:

As He says also in Hosea: “I will call them My people, who

were not My people; and her BELOVED, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God" (Rom. 9:25-26).

Far ahead of time, God planned a major, spiritual shift. All those previously estranged from Him—both the Jewish people (who had fallen away) and the Gentiles (who were never included)—would be given the opportunity, in the New Covenant, to enter a deep, full, and loving relationship with the Father who declares, "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3).

Instead of being rejected by God, we who respond are now "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). Because of our union with the firstborn Son of God, we are just as accepted, just as loved and just as welcomed in the Almighty's presence—for "through Him [Jesus] we both have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:18; see Matthew 3:17). Hosea claimed that once this shift took place, God's people would be called "Ammi" (which means My people), "Ruhamah" (which means having obtained mercy) and "Jezreel" (which can also mean His seed planted in the earth). These are all additional names that rest upon God's people now. What a miracle of restoration!

Jesus prayed we would be established in this covenant of love in His great intercessory prayer over the church:

"Father . . . I have given them the glory which You gave Me, that they may be one even as We are one . . . that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (John 17:1, 22-23, MEV).

What an awe-inspiring prophetic statement! Jesus wanted "the world" to know that both He and His bride (the church) are equally beloved of the Father—that the same depth of infinite love bestowed on Him has been bestowed on us—yet amazingly, many believers have never arrived at this peak of revelation

with its breathtaking view of who we are in God's great plan.

No wonder Paul called this a love "which surpasses knowledge" (Eph. 3:19). It cannot be comprehended intellectually; it must be experienced. Though we were once "far away," we have now been "brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). Though many of us can look back in regret to a "Gomer-like" past, we are now "the dearly beloved of His soul," for time and eternity (Jer. 12:7).

To get a deeper understanding of this wonderful title for God's people, listen to a past episode of Mike Shreve's weekly podcast called, "Discover Your Spiritual Identity."

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Giving God Thanks After Being Robbed

One of my favorite stories about maintaining a thankful heart comes from the respected Bible commentator Matthew Henry. At a certain point in his walk with God, he made a commitment to always abide by the often-quoted biblical command:

“In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess. 5:18, MEV).

Of course, this verse does not mean we give thanks to God for the problems of life but rather we thank God in spite of the problems of life—thus rising above them. Not surprisingly, Matthew Henry’s commitment was put to a test soon after he made it.

He was robbed.

At first he felt compelled to react in negative ways: upset, angry, depressed and fearful. But then he remembered his commitment. So he sat down, took hold of his mind and prayerfully pondered how to respond the situation. Feeling inspired, he wrote down four things he decided he could be thankful for, despite the life-threatening encounter he had just endured.

This is the proclamation he penned to God:

“Let me be thankful first because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.”

When I was confronted with this story and realized how thankfulness calmed his mind and realigned his faith, I was immediately convicted of areas of negativity in my own thought life and speech that needed to be adjusted. The thought kept echoing in my heart, "If Matthew Henry could be that thankful after being robbed literally, then I need to more passionately express thankfulness when it seems I've been robbed—mentally, emotionally or even physically—by circumstances of life.

"Robbed by who or what?" you may say. Robbed by unexpected adversities, by the lower nature, by our own failures, by the corrupt world system, by harmful relationships or even by evil spirits whose agenda is to "steal, and kill, and destroy" (John 10:10).

Anyone professing faith in God should pursue this mindset in the following two ways:

First when we approach God in prayer, we should rehearse with gratitude the things He already has done in our lives, as commanded in Psalm 100:4:

"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise; be thankful to Him, and bless His name."

Second, when we present our petitions, we're instructed to thank Him in advance for things we desire Him to do:

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with gratitude, make your requests known to God" (Phil. 4:6).

Six things are accomplished by giving God thanks in this dual way (as illustrated by the following acrostic):

T—Tames the turmoil of the mind

H—Helps the focus of the heart

A—Acknowledges the goodness of God

N–Nullifies the influence of the enemy

K–Kindles the fire of joy unspeakable

S–Sets the stage for miraculous, divine intervention. {eoa}

Author Mike Shreve has two podcasts on the Charisma Podcast Network: Discover Your Spiritual Identity (a study of the names and titles of the children of God) and Revealing the True Light (comparative religion subjects). Charisma House has also published four of his books: 65 Promises from God for Your Child, 25 Powerful Promises from God, Powerful Prayers for Supernatural Results and WHO AM I? Dynamic Declarations of Who You Are in Christ.

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The Unconquerable Household of Faith

Discover Your Spiritual Identity!

The Revelation of the Names and Titles God Has Given His People

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who are of THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH” (Gal. 6:10, MEV).

Two primary definitions are assigned to the word "faith." First, our "faith" is the sum of religious principles on which we base our lives; second, it is the act of believing in God and trusting His promises.

The word "household" can mean either a family or all those residing in the same home. As born-again believers, we are part of the same family—a relationship that is revealed not by denominational affiliation but by a mutual, authentic faith in the One who is our Savior and Redeemer.

Strangely, the word "faith" only appears twice in the Old Testament but over 240 times in the New Covenant—so it is definitely an emphasis in this era. There is much to be learned about this spiritual "substance" that Paul calls the "mystery of the faith" (Heb. 11:1; 1 Tim. 3:9). Here are eight primary aspects to that "mystery" revealed:

(1) Faith is a gift from God—Ephesians 2:8 declares, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God." A gift is not something earned; it is given freely as an expression of love. God so loved us that He gave us the desire and the capacity to believe. Jesus is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). So once He awakens faith within our hearts, He is committed to developing it in us until it reaches final fruition.

(2) Faith is allocated by God—Every child of God receives a "measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3). In His omniscience, God anticipates all His offspring will be called to do and all the battles and challenges we will face in life. In advance, He assigns to us enough faith to always succeed.

(3) Faith is awakened by God's Word and is necessary to receive God's Spirit—"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Then, as we speak the "word of faith," we are saved (Rom. 10:8). Next, we go on to "receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:14). As we partake of the "spirit of faith" (a title for the Holy Spirit), we are empowered to accomplish great things for the

kingdom (2 Cor. 4:13).

(4) Faith justifies us in the sight of God—Christians are “justified by faith” (Rom. 5:1). To be justified means to be legally acquitted of all guilt, as if we never sinned, and recognized as righteous in the sight of God.

(5) Faith is a spiritual weapon—Paul exhorted Timothy to “fight the good fight of faith” and “lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:12). There are so many adversaries on this journey from time to eternity, within and without. We war against literal powers of darkness, as well as dark attitudes and thoughts that churn within our own hearts and minds. One way we fight is by speaking to “mountains” with the authority of God’s Word (see Mark 11:23).

(6) Faith grants ultimate victory—First John 5:4 says, “Whoever is born of God overcomes the world, and the victory that overcomes the world is our faith.” There is nothing that this world can throw at us that faith cannot overpower—one way or the other.

(7) Faith activates resurrection power—At the graveside of Lazarus, Jesus asserted, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, yet shall he live” (John 11:25). When we believe that the Father raised His Son from the dead, our souls are saved (see Rom. 10:8-10). Then we go on to believe God will raise us from the dead and we are to live forever in His presence.

(8) Faith will bring us to perfection eternally—Ephesians 4:11-13 (NKJV) reveals that the five-fold ministry exists to build up the body of Christ “till we all come to the unity of the faith . . . to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (v. 13). So faith will ultimately bring us to absolute perfection, completion, glorification and fullness—finally emerging in the full image of the firstborn Son. How amazing is that!

God gives us the power to believe and then blesses us eternally because we believe. May all the glory return to Him!

To explore this wonderful subject more deeply, listen to two recent episodes of Mike Shreve's weekly podcast called "Discover Your Spiritual Identity": The Unconquerable "Household of Faith" and Two Parables that Increase Faith.

Some of our podcasts are also available in a video format on our YouTube channel: {eoa}

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A Royal Priesthood: How Can

You Be a Spiritual King and Priest Simultaneously?

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“But you are a chosen generation, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, a holy nation, His own special people” (1 Pet. 2:9, NKJV).

Jesus was both king and priest.

As the “King of kings,” He manifested divine dominion in this world: reigning over sin, over sickness, over Satan, over evil spirits, over temptations, over negative circumstances and over His own flesh (Rev. 19:16). He ruled over hate with love, over depression with joy and over judgmental attitudes with the mercy of God. Irresistible in power, He even brought the greatest arch-enemies of the human race under subjection: death, hell and the grave bowed to His sovereign authority.

As the “Great High Priest,” Jesus lived a life of service, serving the Father with adoration and serving the human race with compassion, even the lowliest (Heb. 4:14). In priestly intercession, He stood in the gap for the needy, providing atonement for their sins and reconciling their wayward hearts to God.

In both of these areas, the firstborn Son of God became a living example of how we are to walk in this world—as spiritual kings and priests—or as 1 Peter 2:9 puts it, “a royal priesthood.” All children of God bear this dual image. Revelation 1:6 boldly declares that Jesus already “has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” So, this is not just a futuristic calling.

– As kings, we wield God-given authority over the sin nature and over a demonically infested and broken world system filled with fear, anxiety, perversity, lust and unbelief. We reign by manifesting the nature of the kingdom of God—traits like courage, peace, purity and faith.

– As priests, we minister to God in worship and serve the needs of others. Our greatest privilege as priests is to reconcile fallen human beings to a right relationship with God. (See 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.) Old Testament priests did that by officiating over the sacrifice of animals at an altar to atone for sin (providing a temporary covering). We do it by leading people to the cross where the blood of Jesus blots out their sins forever.

At the onset of Israel's wilderness journey, God revealed that this dual calling was His original will for all the seed of Abraham, even under the Old Covenant. He told Moses to communicate to the people:

“Now therefore, if you will faithfully obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My special possession out of all the nations, for all the earth is Mine. And you will be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod. 19:5-6, MEV).

Yes, God wanted every Israelite to be a part of His kingdom—both male and female, old and young—to reign in life victoriously and to have priestly access into His presence. That intention was never fully realized, however, because the law was not able to change the hearts of God's people. It put a restraint on human behavior but did not change human character. But when the Father made a way for the Lord Jesus Christ to dwell within the hearts of repentant and believing human beings, one of His primary purposes was and is to transfer His image to them—which includes this marriage of both the “King” and “Priest” callings.

Our hearts should be filled with awe even now at the profoundness of such a great blessing. But surely when this earthly pilgrimage is over, we will realize even more the goodness of God toward us when we join the heavenly multitude singing to the Lamb of God:

“‘You are worthy . . . for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests unto our God; and we shall reign on the earth’” (Rev. 5:9-10).

So apparently, even into eternity, we will continue in these complementary roles. Until that glorious era comes, let us walk in our spiritual identity by reigning and by serving—and all for the glory of God.

To explore this wonderful subject more deeply, listen to past episodes of Mike Shreve’s weekly podcast called, “Discover Your Spiritual Identity”: A Royal Priesthood and A Holy Priesthood. Some of our podcasts are also available in a video format on our YouTube channel: {eoa}

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The Bride, The Lamb's Wife: Who Will Be Married to the Heavenly Bridegroom Forever?

Discover Your Spiritual Identity!

The Revelation of the Names and Titles God Has Given His People

"Then one of the seven with me saying, 'Come, I will show you THE BRIDE, THE LAMB'S WIFE'" (Rev. 21:9, NKJV).

After the angel invited John to behold the Lord's "bride," a stunning vision unfolded before him.

"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light like a most precious jewel, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (Rev. 21:10-11).

What an enigma! The angel told John he would see a bride and instead he saw a city—but it wasn't just any city. It was "New Jerusalem," the capital city of the New Creation, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2).

Of course it's not really the city but the inhabitants of that city who will be married to the heavenly Bridegroom. However, the city and the bride are one. Because of this, certain details about the city are powerfully symbolic, prophetic unveilings about the nature of those "lovers of God" who will be eternally joined to the heavenly Bridegroom, the Lamb of God who took away our sins.

The Gates and Foundations Symbol

For hundreds of years, students of the Word have pondered the mystery of who is in the bride. Is it comprised of the whole body of Christ or just those who walk in intimacy with the Lord? Is it made up of just New Covenant saints or are Old Covenant Israelites included? Symbolism is the language of God and through the symbolism of verses 12 and 14, God gives a simple answer to that profound question. In describing the eternal city, John said:

“She had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel” (Rev. 21:12).

“Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:14).

So the twelve gates are named after the twelve tribes of Israel (God’s people under the Old Covenant) and the twelve foundations are named after the twelve apostles of the Lamb (those used of God to lay the foundation of the New Covenant). This indicates that there is a mixture of both covenants in the city of God. All its citizens ultimately enter the city through the gates of the Law (that revelation from the former era that reveals our guiltiness in the sight of God) but are established on the foundation of that grace that came through the New Covenant (by the crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of God). All the redeemed of both covenants are married to God eternally and will ever be a part of His bridal company.

The Pearl Symbol

“The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each individual gate was of one pearl” (Rev. 21:21).

Pearls are produced when a parasite or a grain of sand becomes

lodged in the folds of an oyster's flesh. Unable to rid itself of this "uninvited guest," the oyster will secrete a milky-like substance called nacre and coat the "intruder" over and over—until finally something valuable and beautiful is created out of that which initially seemed only worthless and painful. And so it is with our lives. We learn to respond to all the negative things we face in this world by covering them—over and over again—with the "pure milk" of God's Word (1 Pet. 2:2). This process will teach us lessons here in this world that are valuable and beautiful and will ultimately become a gate to an eternal heavenly dwelling place.

The Gold Symbol

"The city was pure gold, like clear glass" (Rev. 21:18).

Because it is one of the most valuable metals, gold is a fitting, biblical symbol of the divine nature. During his great trial, Job said, "I will come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). In other words, he knew God would use all of his adversities to mature him spiritually and to develop godlike character in him. He knew he would be better off in the end than he was in the beginning. When gold is heated and liquefied, the dross floats to the surface so the goldsmith can scoop it away. So it is for the bride. We may face fiery trials in life but it is so "the genuineness" of our faith, being "much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tried by fire, may be found to result in praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

The Name Symbol

The name of the eternal city of God is "New Jerusalem." Because "Jerusalem" means possession of peace, "New Jerusalem" implies a new depth of peace far beyond anything we have ever experienced. This was foretold in the beloved prophecy Isaiah gave concerning the coming Messiah:

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the

government shall be upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end" (Isa. 9:6-7).

After passing through this world with all its danger, stress, confusion and strife, the bride will finally possess "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding"—ever abounding and ever increasing for all eternity (Phil. 4:7).

To explore this wonderful subject more deeply, listen to two past episodes of Mike Shreve's weekly podcast called, "Discover Your Spiritual Identity": The Mystery of the Bride of Christ (Ep. 3) and Our Role as "The Lamb's Wife (Ep. 4)." {eoa}

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Oracles of God: Speaking Prophetically as Representatives of the Almighty

Discover Your Spiritual Identity!

The Revelation of the Names and Titles God Has Given His People

“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the ORACLES OF GOD” (1 Pet. 4:11, MEV, emphasis added).

The word “oracle” means a divinely inspired utterance; it can also mean the person used as God’s mouthpiece. The prophetic statement is an oracle and the one speaking prophetically is an oracle.

This term is found three other times in the New Testament and is always a reference to the Word of God (translated from the Greek word *logion*, pronounced log’-ee-on):

– Acts 7:38: Luke explains how Moses received the “living oracles to give to us” (the revelations he received from God on Mount Sinai).

– Romans 3:2: Paul explains the advantage of being Jewish, “because the oracles of God were entrusted to them” (a reference to all Old Testament Scripture).

– Hebrews 5:12: the writer explains that his readers should already be teachers but needed someone to teach them again “the first principles of the oracles of God” (this included

New Covenant revelation).

The New Living Translation of our main title-scripture exhorts believers to “speak as if God Himself is speaking.” This is fulfilled on several levels.

First, believers should purge out of their speech all words of fear, doubt, bitterness, resentment and selfishness—the kind of negative words that God would never speak—and instead speak words of faith, confidence, love, forgiveness and unselfishness.

Second, believers should fill their speech with references to God’s Word, “speaking the truth in love”—conducting themselves as living “letters of Christ” (“epistles of Christ”) in all their day-to-day encounters (Eph. 4:15; 2 Cor. 3:3, MEV).

Third, the NIV translation renders this verse, “If anyone speaks, they should do so as one speaking the very words of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). On the highest level, this relates to far more than just maintaining positive, godly attitudes or quoting the Bible. It means sharing truth with others under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph. 4:29, KJV). At times it may involve being used in “the word of knowledge” or “the word of wisdom”: flashes of inspired insight concerning situations in people’s lives and God’s divine directives to them. This manner of communication is often referred to as “speaking prophetically.”

Fourth, when believers not only speak but pray as oracles of God, they tend to imitate the firstborn Son of God in the way He prayed. Jesus did not plead with the Father to heal the sick or deliver the oppressed. Knowing that He was God’s mouthpiece, He commanded them to be healed and set free. He taught His followers to use a similar method, as in the following often-quoted passages:

“The Lord said, ‘If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed,

you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and be planted in the sea," and it would obey you'" (Luke 17:6, MEV).

"For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks through you" (Matt. 10:20).

Certainly, there are many qualifying factors that determine what believers can say, how they can say it and when it will be effective. We cannot indiscriminately decree whatever we want, whenever we want and, without fail, watch it come to pass. To think so would be absurd. However, these passages do reveal that Christians have an authority, an ability to speak with as God's representatives that is really astounding. The key is prayerful surrender, as Jesus indicated in the following passage:

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7, NKJV).

Of course, as you truly fulfill this charge, His words will blend with your words and the world will be changed dramatically and supernaturally. As dark and wicked as this generation is becoming, God knows we need oracles to rise up now!

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The General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn: Every Child of God Is Equally Important and Equally Beloved

Discover Your Spiritual Identity!

The Revelation of the Names and Titles God Has Given His People

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN, who are enrolled in heaven; to God, the Judge of all; and to the spirits of the righteous ones made perfect” (Heb. 12:22-23, emphasis added).

This title for God’s people appears only once in Scripture, yet provides one of the most powerful insights available concerning our spiritual identity, inheritance and purpose.

The phrase “general assembly” means this status is for every child of God.

The word “church” means called-out ones, for God has “called” us “out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

All who are washed in the blood of Jesus are equally loved, equally cleansed, equally righteous and equally gifted with eternal life. For this reason, they are named the “church of the firstborn” or, as another version states, “the whole Church in which everyone is a firstborn-son and a citizen of heaven” (Heb. 12:23 MEV, JB).

The Firstborn Status

In the Hebrew culture, a firstborn son obtained exceptional blessings, privileges and responsibilities. He received the “birthright” and the primary “blessing.” The birthright was the status of being the head of the household, following the demise of the father, and the primary inheritor of his estate. Though a blessing was normally given to all the offspring, a greater blessing was reserved for the one given “firstborn” status (see Gen. 25:21-34; 27:1-41; 48:1-22; 49:1-43).

A mystery of the kingdom of God unfolds when we inspect those chosen as “firstborn sons” in the patriarchal line of the Old Testament:

– Cain was literally Adam’s firstborn but went the way of evil. Abel was the second son yet obtained the firstborn status, for his worship was received (see Heb. 11:4).

– Ishmael was literally Abraham’s firstborn son by Hagar but was disinherited. Isaac was Abraham’s second son (Sarah’s first), a child of promise, and he obtained the firstborn status.

– Esau was Isaac’s firstborn son but sold his birthright for a bowl of lentils. Jacob, the second son, obtained the firstborn

status (see Rom. 9:13).

- Reuben was Jacob's firstborn son but forfeited his inheritance because of incest. Joseph, the eleventh son, obtained the firstborn status and the coat of many colors.
- Manasseh was Joseph's firstborn son but Ephraim, the second son, obtained the firstborn status (see Gen. 48:8-20).

Over and over again, the first was last and the last was first—a spiritual pattern in God's plan (see Matt. 19:30; 20:16). In these examples, those qualified in the flesh to obtain the firstborn status were excluded but those who were graced by God prevailed.

On a larger scale, Egypt was the greatest of all nations but when God searched the world over to find a covenant people, He chose Israel, "the smallest of all nations" (Deut. 7:7, NLT). Thus the least became the greatest—the lowest became the highest—the last became the first—and the "tail" became "the head" (Deut. 28:13). God even boasted, "Israel is My son, even My firstborn" (Exod. 4:22, MEV).

How does that relate to our placement in the "church of the firstborn"? Because none of us qualified by our own goodness or greatness to be included in God's family; we were saved by grace alone. We were all unworthy and unfit. Some of us were among the worst but God sent His unmerited love into our lives to lift us from the bottom to the top.

The Double Portion

In Hebrew tradition, the "firstborn son" received the "double portion" inheritance (Deut. 21:17). This did not always mean twice as much; it just indicated a larger amount. The smaller portion remaining was divided among the other heirs.

Jesus was titled "the firstborn among many brothers," "the firstborn over all creation" and "the firstborn from the dead"

(Rom. 8:29, MEV; Col. 1:15, NKJV; Rev. 1:5, NKJV)? If so, what was His “double portion” inheritance? Could it be the dual aspect of His nature?

– He was “the Word” that “became flesh” (John 1:14, NKJV).

– He received “the Spirit without measure” (John 3:34, MEV).

These two wondrous gifts are also imparted to every member of the church of the firstborn, for we are:

– Begotten of the Word (James 1:18 KJV, see also 1 Cor. 4:15, 1 John 5:1);

– Born of the Spirit (John 3:1-7).

By these two inheritance gifts we are made whole, for “of His fullness we have all received” (John 1:16, NKJV). Yes, every child of God has this double portion inheritance.

In the resurrection, these two aspects of our inheritance will be brought to utter perfection. We will also “inherit all things,” in realms terrestrial and celestial (Rev. 21:7). So regardless of the disappointments we have faced in this life, we can claim God’s promise:

“Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours” (Isa. 61:7, NIV).

These truths are magnificent!

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