

## Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

**Introduction:** Jesus is one of the central figures of our faith. We find several places that admonish us to look to Jesus for salvation, for His example, and as our Lord and King. I want to spend a few moments considering the importance of Jesus' life and as we go throughout this week, consider various aspects of Jesus' life and all that He has accomplished for us so we may turn our eyes upon Him and give Him the glory that He deserves.

### I. Jesus: The Focal Point of History

#### A. Every Person Must Answer: Who Is Jesus?

1. During His ministry, many asked:
  - a. "Who is this?" (Matthew 21:10)
  - b. "Who forgives sins?" (Luke 7:49)
  - c. "Who is this man?" (Luke 9:9)
  - d. "Who is the Son of Man?" (John 12:34)
2. Each person must decide who Jesus is and how they will respond.

#### B. The Most Influential Life Ever Lived

Though He lived simply and without worldly status, Jesus has impacted humanity more than any other person. In 1926 James A Francis wrote an essay entitled, *One Solitary Life*. It reads:  
He was born in an obscure village, The child of a peasant woman. He grew up in still another village, Where he worked in a carpenter shop Until he was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a house. He didn't go to college. He never visited a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles From the place where he was born. He did none of the things One usually associates with greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

He was only thirty-three When the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies. And went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross Between two thieves. While he was dying, His executioners gambled for his clothing, The only property he had on Earth.

When he was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave Through the pity of a friend. Twenty centuries have come and gone, And today he is the central figure Of the human race, And the leader of mankind's progress. All the armies that ever marched, All the navies that ever sailed, All the parliament that ever sat, All the kings that ever reigned, Put together have not affected The life of man on Earth As much as that *One Solitary Life*.

#### C. Why Jesus Matters

1. Center of God's plan – Galatians 4:4–5; Ephesians 1:7–10
2. Our Savior – Luke 2:11; Romans 5:8
3. Our Example – Hebrews 4:15–16; 1 Peter 2:21
4. Our Hope – John 14:1–3; Hebrews 6:19

### II. Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

#### A. From Darkness to Light

1. Jesus is the light of the world – John 8:12
2. Walk in His light – Hebrews 12:2; Ephesians 5:8
3. He gives abundant life – John 10:10

#### B. From Death to Victory

1. Jesus died and rose again
2. We follow Him in baptism – Romans 6:3–4
3. Freed from sin – Romans 6:12–14
4. More than conquerors – Romans 8:37

#### C. Trust and Proclaim His Word

1. God's word never fails – 1 Peter 1:25
2. Trust His promises
3. Share His salvation – Colossians 1:27–29

#### D. Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of His glory and grace.

**Conclusion:** Jesus serves as the very foundation upon which our faith is built. Without Jesus taking on flesh, offering Himself as the sacrifice for sin, and rising from the dead in victory, our faith would be futile and we would still be dead in sin. Let us be grateful for all that Jesus has done for us and look unto Him for His guidance in our lives so we can follow His example. May we seek to imitate Christ in all we do.

## The Gospel of the Kingdom

**Introduction:** We often think of the gospel as the death and resurrection of Jesus—and rightly so. But Scripture shows that these events point to something greater: the reign of Jesus as King. The gospel is not only about forgiveness, but about the coming and rule of God’s kingdom. Let us consider the gospel of the kingdom and what that means for us.

### I. The Gospel of the Kingdom

- A. Jesus preached “the gospel of the kingdom” (Matthew 4:23; 9:35)
- B. The message: “Repent, for the kingdom is at hand” (Mark 1:14–15)
- C. The disciples preached it (Luke 9:2)
- D. The early church continued it (Acts 8:12; 19:8)
- E. While we see the gospel of the kingdom was preached, what was the message? Let us look at a couple of passages to see the nature of the gospel of the kingdom.

### II. Jesus: The Promised King: Romans 1:1–6

- A. Promised in Scripture
  - 1. Foretold through the prophets
  - 2. Rooted in promises to David: 2 Samuel 7:12–14
  - 3. Jesus is the descendant of David and rightful King: Luke 1:31–33
  - 4. Jesus fulfills God’s long-awaited plan.
- B. Declared in Power by the Resurrection
  - 1. Jesus truly died, but was raised: Psalm 16:8–10
  - 2. The resurrection marked His exaltation
  - 3. He now reigns until all enemies are subdued: 1 Corinthians 15:25
  - 4. Jesus is the Son of God in power—the reigning King.
- C. The Call: Obedience of Faith
  - 1. The gospel calls all nations to submit to Christ
  - 2. Salvation is extended to both Jews and Gentiles: Romans 1:16; Ephesians 2:11–16
  - 3. The proper response to the King is obedience and faith.

### III. The Exalted King: Philippians 2:6–11

- A. Jesus humbled Himself, becoming a servant
  - 1. Jesus existed before His incarnation: John 1:1
  - 2. Obedient even to death
- B. God highly exalted Him
  - 1. Every knee will bow
  - 2. Every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord
  - 3. Jesus is enthroned as Lord over all.

**Conclusion:** The glorious news of the gospel is the fact that Jesus died for our sins, rose from the dead and has now been enthroned as King where He reigns forevermore. These truths serve to give us confidence that we serve a great King who reigns over all and whose kingdom will not be shaken. We can also take comfort knowing that our King subdues all opposition and as long as we bow the knee to Him, we will share the victory with Him. Let us faithfully serve our great King and bow before Him in all we do.

## What Jesus Does For Me

**Introduction:** We've noted before that Jesus is the most significant man that has ever walked the earth. The pinnacle of human history is centered on Him and the death that he died to redeem mankind. While we often gather to remember Jesus, it serves us well to consider and remind ourselves of what Jesus does for us. While our faith may waiver, we may stumble, looking back to Jesus and all that He has done can help to correct our course and keep us seeking Him. Let us consider for a few moments what Jesus has done for us.

### I. He Reveals God to Us:

- A. To see Jesus is to see the Father: John 14:8-10, Hebrews 1:3
- B. The truth of God and the character of God was revealed to us through Jesus. Through Jesus, we learn that God is:
  - 1. Compassionate: Matthew 9:35-36
  - 2. Merciful: John 8:1-11
  - 3. Holy: 1 Peter 2:22
  - 4. Patient:
- C. The fact that Jesus shows us who God is should impress upon us how much we need Him.

### II. He Provides A Pattern:

- A. The life that Jesus lived is a perfect example for us:
  - 1. Though He was in the form of God, He became a man.
  - 2. He didn't come to be pampered, but to serve. Taking the lowest place, a servant: Matthew 20:28
- B. Jesus teaches us how we ought to live: 1 Peter 2:21-23, John 13:13-15, 5:30, 8:28
- C. If we abide in Christ we will walk as He walked: 1 John 2:6
- D. If more people lived like Christ, this world would be a much better place. We all should strive to be conformed to the image of Christ: Romans 8:29

### III. He Gives Access to the Father:

- A. Throughout the old covenant, God was relatively off-limits to the average Jew. God's presence was found in the Most Holy Place and only the High Priest was allowed to enter there, even then only once a year.
- B. The book of Hebrews shows Jesus as a kind of trailblazer that has opened up a path by which we may access the Father: (remember there is significance to the veil of the temple being torn at Jesus' death.): Hebrews 4:14, 9:24-26, 10:19-22, 4:16
- C. Through the blood of Christ we can be brought near to God: Ephesians 2:11-13

### IV. He Cares For Us:

- A. When the disciples were with Jesus in a storm tossed boat, the questioned His care: Mark 4:38
- B. Throughout His ministry, Jesus proved over and over that He cares for all people: Matthew 14:14, 23:37
- C. We have comfort knowing that Jesus cares for us and will help us with the burdens we face: 1 Peter 5:7

### V. He Helps Us Through Difficult Times:

- A. Jesus is described as a man of sorrows, and therefore knows what we endure: Isaiah 53, Hebrews 4:15-16
- B. The difficulties of this life often serve greater purposes: James 1:2-3, Hebrews 12:5-6, Romans 8:28
- C. We must remember that God hears the prayers of His people and will help them through the difficult times: Psalm 34:15-19
- D. In addition to the care that God provides, He gives us brethren to help bear our burdens: Galatians 6:2

### VI. What Will You Do With Jesus?

- A. Pilate asked: Matthew 27:22
- B. Jews, crucify Him: 27:23
- C. Judas, I will sell Him: 26:15
- D. Peter, deny Him: 26:74
- E. Saul, persecute Him: Acts 9:4
- F. Felix, I will wait: Acts 24:25
- G. The disciple: I will love Him, follow Him, serve Him,

**Conclusion:** Jesus has done so much for us, what will you do with Jesus? We have the ability to have peace, joy, hope, and love because of what Jesus has done for us and continues to do for us. Let us trust in Jesus throughout all of our lives so we can have the hope that He has promised.

## The Greater Exodus: From Slaves to Sons

**Introduction:** If you are reading through the Old Testament you've very likely read from Exodus recently. This is a story that serves as a central theme throughout the Old Testament and serves as the identity of God's people. This is a story that points forward to a greater exodus that is accomplished in Christ. Let us spend a few moments considering the Exodus and what that means for us today.

### I. The Exodus:

- A. A. Israel is Oppressed.
  - 1. A Pharaoh arose in Egypt that did not know Joseph.
  - 2. He became concerned that Israel would rise up against them and began to enslave them: 1:8-14
- B. God appoints Moses as deliverer of Israel.
  - 1. Israel cried out to God because of their bondage and God looked upon them: 2:23-24
  - 2. Moses is appointed to return to Egypt to deliver the people of Israel from bondage: Exodus 3-4
  - 3. Moses returns to Egypt and confronts Pharaoh, demanding he release Israel from their bondage: 5:5-9
- C. God delivers Israel through ten plagues:
  - 1. The ten plagues serve as an assault on the gods of Egypt as God demonstrates His power over them.
    - a. God told Moses that Israel would be delivered by His strong hand: 3:19-20
    - b. Pharaoh's magicians were able to replicate the first two plagues with their secret arts, but at the third, they're forced to acknowledge it is the work of God: Exodus 8:19
  - 2. God gives instructions prior to the tenth plague (the death of the firstborn). Israel is to observe the Passover feast: Exodus 12:1-28. After the tenth plague, Pharaoh finally relents and allows Egypt to leave.
  - 3. Israel departs and comes to the Red Sea, the people begin to complain and Moses parts the water and leads the people through on dry ground: Exodus 14
  - 4. Pharaoh changes his mind and pursues Israel but God drowns the Egyptian army in the Red Sea.
- D. God makes a covenant with Israel and establishes His law with them.
- E. The exodus was not just an mere historical event in the history of Israel, it would serve as the foundation of God's identity and their identity as a people.
  - 1. When God gave the law, He reminded the people that He is their deliverer: Exodus 20:2
  - 2. The exodus would serve as a foundation for their relationship with God and shape their identity as His people: Leviticus 11:45

### II. A New Exodus:

- A. Israel serves as a type of Christ. The Exodus points forward to a greater exodus that would be accomplished through Christ:
  - 1. Hosea describes God's disappointment in Israel for failing to live up to the purposes that were established in the Exodus: Hosea 11:1, Matthew 2:15, Exodus 4:22-23
  - 2. The Transfiguration account specifically connects Jesus death with the exodus: Luke 9:30-31
- B. The New Exodus:
  - 1. As Israel was in bondage to Egypt, we were in bondage to sin: John 8:34
  - 2. God appointed Moses to deliver Israel, Jesus is a greater deliverer: Deuteronomy 18:15, 18
  - 3. The Israelites killed the lamb, Jesus is our passover lamb: John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 5:7
  - 4. Israel ate of the Passover lamb; we eat and drink of Christ when we follow His teaching: John 6:53-56
  - 5. God redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt, Jesus redeems us from the bondage of sin: Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 9:13
  - 6. Israel's freedom was on the other side of baptism in the Red Sea, our freedom is on the other side of baptism into Christ's death: 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, Romans 6:4
  - 7. Israel's identity was rooted in their deliverance from Egypt, our identity is rooted in our deliverance from sin and our freedom in Christ: 1 Peter 2:9

### III. A Desire to Return?

- A. I want us to remember how Israel felt under their oppression. They groaned, crying out to God.
- B. Notice how soon they forgot what life in Egypt was like? Exodus 16:2-3, Numbers 11:4-6
- C. It is easy for us to recognize the folly of their desire to return to Egypt, however, when we return to sin we are walking in their footsteps. The Hebrews writer urges us to take heed to their example: Hebrews 3:7-12
- D. The exodus was supposed to define the Israelites and their way of life. In the same way, our exodus must define us and our way of life: Romans 6:8-12

**Conclusion:** The Exodus serves as a tremendous type of the salvation that would be made available through Jesus. Let us recognize our need for redemption and the blessing that has been made available to us and live a life that is rooted in our freedom in Christ.

## The Transfiguration of Jesus

**Introduction:** We have been looking at various events in the life of Jesus. Today we will turn our attention to the Transfiguration of Jesus. This event is a major point in the life of Jesus and teaches us some important lessons. Let us consider this great event and consider its meaning and significance for us.

### I. The Transfiguration:

- A. This event comes on the heels of the events of the 16 chapter:
  1. Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ and then Jesus declares that He will build His church: Matthew 16:16-20
  2. Jesus then teaches the disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and be killed: 21-23
  3. Jesus teaches the commitment required to be a disciple: 24
  4. This section concludes with Jesus' declaration that the kingdom would soon come: 28
- B. Jesus goes up on a high mountain, bringing Peter, James, and John with Him: Luke 9:28-29
- C. Jesus is transfigured:
  1. While Jesus was praying (Luke's account), He was transfigured. The word here is what we get our word metamorphosis from. It is the idea of changing into another form.
  2. The purpose of this transfiguration is to display the glory of Jesus: John 1:14, Hebrews 1:3
  3. While in this form, Moses and Elijah appeared:
    - a. Moses is a personification of the law: Matthew 23:2
    - b. Elijah is a personification of the prophets: 2 Kings 2:13, 15
    - c. Jesus is the fulfillment of them both: Matthew 5:17
  - d. We also see an interesting connection in:
    1. You will not find their graves: Acts 2:31, Deuteronomy 34:5-6, 2 Kings 2:11
    2. They each had a mountain encounter: Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19, 33-34), Mt. Horeb (1 Kings 19)
    3. All were associated with God's glory: Exodus 34:29-30, 1 Kings 19:11-13
    4. They had a prophetic message of returning: Deuteronomy 18:15, Malachi 4:5-6, Acts 1:11
  - e. Moses and Elijah speak to Jesus about the death that Jesus would soon suffer: Luke 9:31
4. The disciples wake up: Luke 9:32
  - a. Peter sees what is happening and states a desire to build three tabernacles, one for each. Luke tells us that he didn't know what He was saying (33), while Mark tells us he didn't know what to answer for they were terrified (9:6).
  - b. There are several suggestions as to Peter's intentions. It may be a desire for Moses and Elijah to stay longer (which of us wouldn't want that?), most likely Peter is seeking other honor them, making Moses and Elijah equal with Jesus.
  - c. The issue with this is that Jesus is not equal with Moses or Elijah but is a fulfillment of their work.
5. While Peter is speaking, God speaks: 'This is my beloved son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!': Hebrews 1:1-2, Matthew 13:9
6. Jesus tells the disciples not to tell anyone about what they saw: Romans 1:4

### II. What Does This Mean?

- A. It was to strengthen Jesus for His sufferings:
  1. While He was God, He still took on flesh and was subject to the same struggles we face.
  2. This event was a reminder of God's approval and His love and pleasure in Jesus.
  3. It also served as a reminder of the glory Jesus had and would have once he returned: John 17:5
- B. To emphasize the superiority of Jesus:
  1. The glory of Jesus was on display: 2 Peter 1:16-18
  2. Jesus has been highly exalted: Philippians 2:9
  3. Everything that Jesus would bring would be far superior to the Law and prophets (Priesthood, sacrifice, worship, salvation).
  4. This would confirm Jesus as the Messiah: Luke 9:35, Isaiah 42:1
- C. To help confirm the faith of the disciples: Matthew 16:16
- D. To point toward our own transformation:
  1. While Jesus was transformed, He is seeking to transform us into His glorious image: Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 3:8
  2. Our goal should be to conform ourselves to the image of Christ.

**Conclusion:** This shows us the importance of the Transfiguration of Jesus. Jesus was shown in all His glory and is confirmed as the Messenger of God that we should listen to. Jesus will return in glory and carry the faithful to glory. Let us honor the Lord and faithfully serve Him so we can dwell with Him in glory.

## The Suffering Servant

**Introduction:** One of the more well known prophecies concerning the Christ is found in Isaiah 53. It is the last in what are referred to as Servant Songs. They are looking forward to the Messiah and describing Him and His identity and mission. Today we will turn our attention to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. We noted a couple of weeks ago this is a prophecy of the cross that is spoken from the perspective of one looking up at the cross. Let us see this prophecy and what we learn about Jesus.

### I. The Rejected Servant: 1-3

- A. We find the beginning of this chapter with the question, who has believed our report?
  - 1. We find this referenced in John 12:37-41 and Romans 10:16 to show that Israel rejected the Messiah and in doing so, fulfilled the idea of this passage.
  - 2. This shows that the suffering servant would be one who was rejected by men.
- B. He also describes the arm of the Lord being revealed.
  - 1. The arm of the Lord is a metaphor for God's mighty power. It is used in Isaiah 51:9-10 to refer to the work of God during the exodus.
  - 2. In this chapter (and ultimately the person of Christ) we find the arm of the Lord being revealed but it is a rejected Messiah. It is not the conquering King that many were expecting.
- C. He grew up like a tender shoot: vs 2
  - 1. This takes us back to the imagery of 11:1. The previous chapter provides the imagery of forests being cut down (Israel being taken down by Assyria and then Assyria being judged). Then from the remaining stump you have the shoot of Jesse shooting up and becoming prosperous.
  - 2. This speaks to the humble beginnings of the Messiah. He has no stately birth, no regal adornments, no human glory. The point is people aren't following Him for external reasons: cf. I Samuel 16:6
  - 3. The people wanted a regal crown, Jesus wore a crown of thorns. They wanted an exalted king, Jesus was a humble Servant.
- D. A Man of Sorrows and Acquainted with Grief:
  - 1. The Messiah would be one who was largely despised and rejected by men.
  - 2. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. This would be the reason many did not receive Him. He was not the conquering hero that many wanted but one who was suffering for sins. They viewed Him as one who suffered for His own wrong doing but the very next verse shows us He suffered for OUR iniquities.
- E. We see then that this suffering servant is one who would be rejected by men.

### II. The Suffering Servant: 4-6

- A. As we just alluded to, Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief because He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows.
  - 1. We need to pause to understand what this means. Consider Matthew 8:16-17
    - a. In what sense did Jesus take their infirmities and bear their sicknesses? He didn't become a leper, He took the sickness away.
    - b. This is the same word in Matthew 3:11 where John says he is not fit to 'remove' the Messiah's sandals.
    - c. It is important to note that this is not teaching that all the sins of the world were transferred to Jesus. Rather, He took them away.
  - 2. We esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God.
    - a. That is, those who saw Him suffering viewed Him as suffering for His own transgressions.
    - b. Think about the ways they railed against Him on the cross:
      - He saved others, He cannot save Himself. Matthew 27:42
      - Let Him save Himself, if this is the Christ of God, His chosen One! Luke 23:35
      - He trusts in God, let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him. Matthew 27:43
- B. By His wounds we are healed:
  - 1. In this section we learn that it is not for His own transgressions that the Messiah would suffer but for our own.
  - 2. This shows us part of the purpose for the suffering of the Messiah. That is sacrifice to remove or atone for our sins. Not to have our sins transferred, but an offering for sin.
- C. The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him:
  - 1. The reason for Jesus being pierced for our transgressions is further explained in verse 6. We have all gone astray. This echoes the idea in Romans 3:10-12
  - 2. Therefore the Lord gave Him up for our sins:
    - a. The LXX renders this 'The Lord gave Him up for our sins.'
    - b. The same word caused to fall on Him is used in verse 12 and is translated interceded.

- c. It is the same greek word used in Romans 8:32 (He was delivered up) and Ephesians 5:2 (He gave Himself up).
- D. The picture of the Servant (Messiah) here is one of suffering on behalf of others. He offers Himself to provide cleansing and healing from sin: John 1:29

### III. The Submissive Servant: 7-9

- A. We get the picture of Jesus here as a submissive sheep, offering Himself as a sacrifice willingly.
  - 1. Peter applies this idea to Christ: 1 Peter 2:23-24
  - 2. This is why we see Jesus willingly going to Jerusalem and not resisting His arrest and subsequent death.
- B. He was stricken for the transgressions of my people:
  - 1. Many view Jesus as a vicarious sacrifice. That He died in my place, He took the punishment I deserved. 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 10:6, 8 (LXX: sin offering 50 times)
    - I was condemned to die but Jesus took my place.
    - He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them His very own.
    - Bearing shame, and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood.
    - His body given in our stead.
  - 2. The picture of Isaiah here is that Jesus died on behalf of my sins. He is the offering for my sin. My sins were not transferred to Him, He did not become guilty of sin. He offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice through which I could be forgiven.
    - a. There is also the fact that the animal for the sin offering had to be pure and unblemished. For Jesus to literally become sin would mean He was an unholy and blemished sacrifice.
    - b. This leads us to some blasphemous pictures of our Savior.
- C. Consequences of this Substitution:
  - 1. Substitution does not provide the picture of God forgiving sins. If Jesus paid our punishment, then there was no forgiveness: Matthew 18:23-27
  - 2. Second, if the punishment for my sin was paid, I no longer need to be concerned about obedience to God. Spurgeon said 'if Christ has died for you, you can never be lost. God will not punish twice for one thing. If God punished Christ for your sins He will not punish you. How can God be just if He punished Christ, the substitute, and then man himself afterward?
  - 3. This also leads to universalism or limited atonement. Introduction to Christian Theology: If Christ bore the sinner's punishment as a substitute, then the sinner is unconditionally free from it, for both the sinner and the substitute cannot be punished for the same offense.
  - 4. I think many of us are appalled at the statements and we wonder how they could reach such conclusions. The reality is they are just being consistent. If Jesus took my place, if Jesus took my punishment, these are the natural conclusions.
- D. Jesus shed His blood to provide the cleansing from sin. He is the perfect, spotless lamb who died so that my sins could be forgiven. It was not punishment, it was sacrificial atonement. Ephesians 5:2

### IV. The Victorious Servant: 10-12

- A. These last few verses show us a picture of the victorious servant: Though the Servant would suffer, God would see and be satisfied with the end result, that is, He will justify many and many will be made righteous.
- B. The suffering of the Servant would provide redemption and freedom from sin. God would forgive His people of their iniquity and remember their sin no more.
- C. This is not the picture of the Father turning His face away in disgust. It is one who looks upon the cross as a sweet smelling sacrifice: Ephesians 5:2

**Conclusion:** We see here a beautiful picture of the Suffering Servant. One who would offer Himself to redeem His people from sin and provide forgiveness through His blood (Ephesians 1:7). Jesus was the offering for our sin. Will we live our lives in obedience so we can enjoy the blessings of that redemption?

## Looking To Jesus

**Introduction:** Throughout the New Testament we find a great emphasis upon Jesus. This is to cause us to turn our eyes to Jesus, but we want to remember that the purpose of this emphasis was not to give us more information about Jesus. Looking to Jesus is intended to transform our lives. Let us consider this idea throughout the book of Hebrews so we can see the importance of turning our eyes upon Jesus.

### I. Beholding the Glory of the Lord:

- A. Paul describes witnessing the glory of the Lord is intended to transform us: 2 Corinthians 3:18
  - 1. Throughout this context, Paul has been contrasting the Old and New Covenants (1-11).
    - a. Paul defends his ministry, reminding them they are the fruit of his labor (1-3).
    - b. He is a minister of the new covenant, and shows the difference between the two (4-11).
    - c. Israel (by heritage) continued to read the law with a veil over their heart (12-15).
    - d. However, in Christ, that veil is taken away and we can see what the old covenant was truly pointing to the whole time, Jesus (16-18).
  - 2. We find in the third chapter of Galatians that Paul shows that the law was always intended to bring us to Christ: Galatians 3:24
  - 3. Therefore, as we behold the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image: 3:18
- B. Beholding Jesus:
  - 1. When Paul speaks of beholding Jesus, he's not speaking of a mere glance. It means to look with intense, sincere, and undivided attention that fully encompasses the object of focus.
  - 2. The goal of beholding Jesus is to be transformed to His image: Romans 8:29, 1 John 3:1-3

### II. Looking to Jesus:

- A. In the book of Hebrews, the author is calling the readers to endure.
  - 1. They had faced trials and either were currently facing more or the prospect of more was present. The book was written as a call to endurance.
  - 2. The main thrust of the letter is to see Jesus more clearly. The reality is, if you truly saw Jesus and understood who He is, you'd never turn away from Him or give up on Him.
- B. Jesus is better in every way to everything that has come before:
  - 1. Jesus is the better messenger: 1:1-3
  - 2. Jesus is better than the angels: 1:4-2:18
  - 3. Jesus is better than Moses: 3:1-6
  - 4. Jesus provides better rest than Joshua: 3:7-4:13
  - 5. Jesus is a better High Priest: 4:14-5:10, 7:1-28
  - 6. Jesus mediates a better covenant: Hebrews 8, Jeremiah 31:31-34
  - 7. Jesus offers a better sacrifice: Hebrews 9:25-10:18
  - 8. Jesus provides us access to the Father: 10:19-23, Matthew 27:51) was a symbol that
  - 9. Jesus brings a better kingdom: 12:22-29
- C. Living by faith, Looking to Jesus: 10:35-12:2
  - 1. The author encouraged his readers to draw near to God through Jesus. He goes on to show the importance of endurance in difficult times: 35-36
  - 2. While difficult times will come, the righteous one will endure because he lives by faith.
  - 3. We have many examples of those who through faith and patience inherited the promises (6:12).
    - a. What these great examples of faithfulness have in common is they looked to Jesus to help them through their lives.
    - b. When we look forward to Jesus in the same way, we can receive divine and approval and be made perfect along with them.
  - 4. Fixing our eyes on Jesus:
    - a. The idea is like putting blinders on so as to not be distracted by the things around us.
    - b. In order to fix our eyes on Jesus, we must lay aside sin so we can look with clarity.
    - c. We must run with endurance by looking at Him who finished the race.
    - d. Keeping our gaze fixed upon Jesus because He endured far more than we do, and He has been exalted and seated in triumph at the right hand of God.
    - e. Keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus is the only way we will be able to join Him at the heavenly throne.

**Conclusion:** Throughout the New Testament we find the exhortation to turn our eyes upon Jesus. If you are weary and troubled, if you can't see any light in the darkness, look to the Savior for His light, and abundant life. Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

## Identity in Christ

**Introduction:** Identity is very popular today. People want to be known, not as they are, but how they feel or view themselves. Men identifying as women, women identifying as men. Sadly, we have people identifying as Christians when they're the farthest thing from it. That hits closer to home that we really care to admit.

Throughout the first letter of Peter, he writes to Christians to remind them of their identity in Christ. They belong to God and their lives must reflect their identity in Christ. For a few moments this morning, I would like to consider our identity in Christ and why it is so important for us to embrace our spiritual identity.

### I. The Family of God:

- A. Throughout the first chapter, Peter emphasizes that we are part of a family relationship:
  - 1. Born again to a living hope: 1:3-4 (more than baptism. Born of God. We look like God and enjoy an inheritance.
  - 2. Conduct ourselves as obedient children: 1:14
  - 3. Reflect the image of God that resides within us: 1:15-16
  - 4. If you address God as Father: 1:17
  - 5. We have been purchased by the precious blood of Christ: 1:18-19
  - 6. We are born anew as God's seed has been placed within us: 1:22-23
  - 7. Since we have been born of God, we long for the seed which we bear: 2:1-3
- B. Peter, then, is reminding Christians that though they are a part of the roman empire, their true allegiance and loyalty lies with God as part of the family of God. Paul then carries the identity concept to that of a kingdom.

### II. God's Own People:

- A. We are living stones:
  - 1. Jesus is described as a living stone who is chosen and precious in the sight of God: 2:4
  - 2. We are living stones who are being built up as a spiritual house: 2:5
  - 3. Peter continues to describe Jesus as the chief cornerstone. To those who reject Him, He is stone of stumbling, to those who believe He is precious: 2:6-8
  - 4. All of this builds to Christian's true identity in Christ, which echoes the covenant Israel made on Mt. Sinai: Exodus 19:5-6
- B. A chosen race: Galatians 3:29, Deuteronomy 7:6-7
- C. A royal priesthood: 1 Peter 2:5
- D. A holy nation: cf. Exodus 19:6
- E. A people for God's own possession: Titus 2:14, John 10:27-30
- F. Chosen as heralds: 1 Peter 2:9

### III. Identity Matters:

- A. Peter is writing to these Christians about their identity in Christ because they're facing persecution and it will only get worse. History would suggest that these Christians were not being killed at this point, but they were being maligned for the allegiance to Christ: cf. 2:12, 4:4
- B. We live in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. We face a daily assault from the world in an effort to tear us away from Christ and it's only going to get worse.
- C. Peter addresses the real answer to the problem of persecution. We live as exiles in a foreign land: 1:1, 2:11
  - 1. The patriarchs considered themselves to be exiles living in a foreign land: Hebrews 11:13, 16
  - 2. The righteous shall live by faith: Habakkuk 2:4, Hebrews 10:38
- D. The reality is, our identity is rooted in suffering for Christ:
  - 1. The New Testament makes no effort to sugar coat this reality: Acts 8:1, 2 Timothy 3:12
  - 2. Paul states that the comfort that God gives is related to sharing in the suffering of Christ: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

**Conclusion:** Our identity in Christ must impact every aspect of our lives. God is not a part of our lives, He is our life. For too many Christianity is just something they do instead of who they are. We must live in a way that reflects that identity. There are so many folks who proudly claim their identity as an American citizen and passionately defend that. If we could have half as much passion about our identity in Christ, we would be far better off as God's people. Let us embrace our identity as God's people and allow that to transform every part of our lives.