



The Church - God's Nation of Exiles

Key idea:

The Church is God's Nation in the world today, comprised of believers from every earthly nation, scattered throughout every earthly nation, and with ultimate loyalty and affection reserved for God and His kingdom.

Key text:

1 Peter 1:1-2

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

1 Peter 2:9-12

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

1 Peter 5:13-14

She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. ¹⁴ Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

Key points:

1. We become part of God's people through the salvation worked by the Trinity, not on the basis of our human birth.
2. The Church is God's people/nation that is scattered throughout all of the nations of this earth.

3. In the New Covenant God's people live as exiles in Babylon - whatever earthly nation is their place of residence.
4. As God's nation of exiles, Christians have specific commands on how to conduct our lives:
 - a. We must not follow our cultures lead on morality, but live as God commands.
 - b. We must nonetheless live as faithful, good citizens in the land of our exile.
 - c. We are to pray respectfully for our leaders - no matter whether we approve of their character or actions or not.
 - d. We are to be good neighbors, praying and working for the good of the land of our exile.
5. We must always remember that our ultimate citizenship and loyalty are in heaven, not the earthly country of our birth or citizenship.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. Why does Peter link being the chosen and called people of God with his statements about being aliens, strangers, and exiles? Why is it important to always keep these two statements together?
3. Many of Peter's readers were Roman citizens who were being ridiculed, ostracized, and persecuted for their faith (See 1 Peter 1:6-7; 3:13-17; 4:1-4; 4:12-19; 5:8-10). How did Peter's foundational theme of Christians as God's chosen people living in exile help his readers to think about their experience of suffering? What does it teach me today?
4. How much have I ever studied or thought about Israel's experience as exiles and how it is the pattern for my own Christian experience and life? Which Old Testament books would be helpful for me to understand more of this critical time in Israel's history?
5. Many Christians have thought about America in terms of Old Testament Israel. Why is this wrong? Who is actually God's Israel (His people and nation) in the world today?
6. In the Old Covenant, the 'church' and government were united. Is this the pattern in the New Covenant? If not, what is the relationship between the Church and the government? What is the relationship between individual Christians and their government? How is it different than the relationship between the Church and the State?

7. We are ultimately citizens of two kingdoms - America and the kingdom of God. What are various ways we can fall into error regarding the relationship between our American citizenship and our heavenly citizenship?
8. How does corporate worship help equip me to live as an exile in my own country?
9. Who will I call or see to encourage this week?

Note: For further study in this area, consult the teaching series “Christ, the Church, Christians, and Culture” on the Church website (<https://brcc.church/series/all-series/c4/>). This lengthy series goes into much more detail on complex relationship between Christ, His Church, individual Christians and the culture in which they live.