

How Can God's People Be Identified?

How Can We Know Who Has God's Spirit?

It may sound like a silly question to ask how we might know who God's people are. We might even ask, "What difference does it make?" Aren't people who say they are Christians, Christians? They profess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and would be appalled if anyone would suggest they are anything but Christians.

When the finger points at us personally, then the issue comes into clearer focus, for none of us want to find ourselves rejected of Him, outside of His love, protection, and blessing ... nor do any of us want to see our brethren outside of the body of saints whom our heavenly Father has called and chosen. Our ultimate desire ought to be identical to the Father's desire, that "... all men ... be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4), so they might also participate as kings and priests in the coming government of God on earth (Revelation 5:10).

Yet, Jesus emphatically stated, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Then He went on to describe the person who hears His words but does not obey them as someone who builds his house on sand, without a solid foundation, who falls to ruin when the storms of life hit (Luke 6:49).

At the very least it is useful to know one's own status before the Father, and have the confidence that you are truly purchased by Christ's blood, saved from annihilation, and ready to serve the Living God forever and ever. That knowledge brings tremendous peace of mind and security in day-to-day living, an anchor that cannot be moved through all of the boisterous storms of life.

By Their Fruits....

The overall identifying feature of God's people

is that they possess His spirit. Without that spirit within you are not one of His.

"But you are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if indeed the spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9; see also Galatians 4:6 and I Peter 1:11; NKJV).

The implication here is that those possessing God's spirit actually live *within* both Jesus Christ and the Father, so plainly stated in John 17:21 (see also Romans 12:5; Galatians 3:28). Because the brethren having God's spirit dwell within both the Father and Son, they will be expressing the very nature (fruit) of Them. Thus,



"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good

tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:15-21; NKJV).

God's people — those possessing His spirit — will be known by their fruits, their works and attitudes, for they will be expressing the nature of that spirit placed within them. They are new creations, as II Corinthians 5:17 states, "Therefore, if anyone is in

Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” The stony heart has been replaced by the poor and contrite heart through the internalized spirit (Hebrews 8:10; Isaiah 66:2).

What are these fruits that grow out from the lives of these elect having the spirit of God?

Love [*agape*], “love, generosity, kindly concern, devotedness” (Galatians 5:22).

Joy [*chara*], “joy, gladness, rejoicing, bliss” (Galatians 5:22).

Peace [*eirene*], “peace, tranquility” (Galatians 5:22).

Longsuffering [*makrothumia*], “patience, patient enduring of evil, slowness of avenging injuries, forbearance” (Galatians 5:22).

Kindness [*chrestotes*], “goodness, kindness, gentleness” (Galatians 5:22).

Goodness [*agathosyne*], “goodness, virtue, beneficence” (Galatians 5:22).

Faithfulness [*pistis*], “faith, belief, firm conviction, honesty, integrity” (Galatians 5:22).

Gentleness [*praupatheia*], “meekness, gentleness of mind, kindness” (Galatians 5:23).

Self-control [*ankrateia*], “self-control, continence, temperance” (Galatians 5:23).

Humility [*tapeinoo*], “to bring low, depress, level, to humble, abase, depress the pride of” (Luke 14:11).

Perhaps the most comprehensive of these fruits — which in fact encompasses all of the others in certain ways — is love. Paul eruditely explained what love is in I Corinthians 13:1-7.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked,



Serving others in time of need is a noble trait that separates you from this world of self-centered hedonism.

thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (NKJV).

Moreover, Jesus warned of false prophets who appear to be sheep, but inwardly are ravenous wolves who prey on the flock. They are identified by their fruits: a good tree bears good fruit, and a bad tree bears evil fruit. In fact, Jesus made it clear that a good tree *cannot* bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit, but is cut down and burned up. These two trees are likened to a wise man who builds his house on an immovable rock foundation, and to a foolish man who builds on sand. The consequences of hearing God’s words and doing what they say — building on a firm rock foundation — are everlasting life, not destruction and death as promised to the man who hears but does not act on His words (Luke 6:47-49). This underpinning of sand will be apparent in his life; his fruits will reveal what lawlessness he carries in his heart. It is impossible to hide the evil works of a heart not conquered by the spirit of God, for,

“... the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:7-8; NKJV).

A Servant Attitude

Alongside expressing fruits of the spirit of God dwelling within the person is the possession of a servant attitude. What sort of attitude is this? There is no better example of servanthood than Christ's example the night He was betrayed.

“...[Jesus] rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you'" (John 13:4-5, 12-15: NKJV).

The servant attitude the elect are to express is extant throughout Scripture, perhaps explained best of all during an event the very same night that Jesus washed the disciples' feet, at the last Passover before His crucifixion. The disciples began to argue over who would be greatest in the Kingdom (government) of God. They simply did not get the point Jesus had been trying to express by humbly washing their feet, and by His example throughout their many months together: the least will be greatest (Luke 9:48).

“The kings of the gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the

younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves” (Luke 22:25-27; NKJV).

What sort of service are we talking about here? Jesus Himself shows us in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25:31-40. The sheep at the Son's right hand were promised the Kingdom prepared from the foundation of the eon. What gave them such favor in the Eternal's sight? Feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, providing lodging to strangers, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and those in prison. By doing these things to brethren they were doing them to the Savior Himself!

Willingness to Change (Repent)

Perhaps nothing else characterizes God's true people better than their willingness to change. Once they are shown the truth, if their behavior conflicts with that truth they are convicted of their error and *repent* [Greek *metanoeo*, “to undergo a change in frame of mind and feeling, to make a change in principle and practice’]. Repentance is at the heart of our calling from our past sinful lives, providing the foundation of our new life in faith towards God and the predecessor to baptism, the laying on of hands, and receiving God's spirit (Hebrews 6:1-2). It is the put-



Repentance is a quality that all servants of the Creator practice continually. Without it we cannot change and develop the character of God.

ting away of the “old man” that was crucified with Christ, “... that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (Romans 6:6), “... that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man...” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Paul continues in Ephesians 4, 5, and 6 by showing how God’s spirit within a person constitutes righteousness and holiness. That spirit creates incredible changes in one’s life from its corrupt former pathways, causing one to

- Speak truthfully to others (Ephesians 4:25).
- Give no quarter to Satan the Devil (Ephesians 4:27).
- Quit stealing and work for a living (Ephesians 4:28).
- Speak words of uplift to edify others (Ephesians 4:29).
- Disband with bitterness, wrath, clamor, and evil speaking (Ephesians 5:31).
- Practice kindness and forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32 - 5:2).
- Put away sexual sins, covetousness, and uncleanness (Ephesians 5:3).
- Remove foolish, filthy, and coarse speaking, but rather giving thanks (Ephesians 5:4, 20).
- Not get drunk with wine, but be filled with the spirit (Ephesians 5:18).
- Sing to one another spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19).
- Practice spiritual headship and love in marriage (Ephesians 5:21-33).
- Bring up children in the fear and admonition of God (Ephesians 6:1-4).
- Be strong in the Lord and put on His armor (Ephesians 6:10-18).

At one time all of us were, as Paul put it, “darkness,” but now we are “light.” Thus, we are to walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:8), not in the former ways when we did not know the truth of the Almighty that would release us from captivity to sin. Paul warned the Corinthians not to revert back to the world’s ways of fornication, idolatry, homosexuality,

thievery, covetousness, drunkenness, and extortion, “...and such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the spirit of our God” (I Corinthians 6:9-11).

God’s true people will feel guilt and remorse when they do what is evil. They will always strive to do what is right, even if they cannot achieve perfection in this life. They will understand the impossibility of taming their human nature, just as Paul lamented,

“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice, but what I hate, that I do For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Romans 7:14-15, 18, 22-23).

Paul knew well that only the indwelling spirit of God could give him any reprieve from his wretchedness. All of God’s elect believe the same, for the carnal mind is deceitful above all things and not subject to the laws of God (Romans 8:7). It is “... deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9).

Keeps the Law

God’s people, those having His spirit and obeying His voice, will be motivated to keep “... My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” (Genesis 26:5), even as Abraham, the father of the faithful, kept them. Those commandments include the Fourth Commandment, which states, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). That day is the seventh day of the weekly cycle (Saturday), not the first day (Sunday), so keeping that day is a very strong and open identifier of the elect,

even as God instructed Israel throughout their generations to keep it as a sign between Him and the elect.

“Speak also to the children of Israel, saying, ‘Surely My Sabbath you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and the seventh day He rested and was refreshed” (Exodus 31:13, 15-17; NKJV).

The children of Israel exist today, since they will be present at the end of the age (Ezekiel (37:11-28; 39:23-29, which has not yet arrived, so this perpetual



Prayer and study of the word of God are practices that define the elect, and which they undertake continually.

covenant is still in force ... and God does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). We know that, if you are not an Israelite, to be a part of the ecclesia you must be “grafted in” to the vine of Israel (Romans 11; Galatians 3:28-29); if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. You must become a “spiritual Israelite” in the lineage of Abraham to inherit eternal life.

The true elect possessing God’s spirit will be doing the will of the Father, walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, even as He did ”... nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do, for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner” (John 5:19). That includes keeping the law, which is written in the hearts of those who possess His spirit.

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Hebrews 8:10; Jeremiah 31:33; NKJV).

Sin [Greek *harmatia*, “error, offense”] is defined by law, as made plain in I John 3:4: “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness” (NKJV), and in Romans 5:13 Paul states that sin is not imputed when there is no law. God’s people will be keeping the law in the spiritual intent of those tablets written in stone on Mt. Sinai, the Law and Prophets, which Jesus said emphatically He did not come to destroy but to fulfill (Matthew 5:17-19), and to make more honorable (Isaiah 42:21). God’s elect will not neglect the “weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith” (Matthew 23:23), the very foundational principles which Christ spoke in the Sermon on the Mount. Those to inherit the Kingdom of God will be humble and meek, mourn today for the world’s evils, be merciful and pure of heart, hunger for righteousness, and will be persecuted for their goodness (Matthew 5:3-12).

Pray, Study, Fast, Meditate

Perhaps more than anything, the people of God will be praying, studying God’s word, meditating on

His ways, and fasting periodically. They will also be fellowshiping with brethren of like mind whenever possible. The spirit of God within them will lovingly but strongly draw them to pray continually (I Thessalonians 5:17; Luke 18:1-8; 21:36; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2; I Timothy 5:5; I Peter 4:7).

God's people will be highly motivated to delve into the words of the Bible to have God speak with them (I Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:10-11; John 5:39; Deuteronomy 31:12; Joshua 3:9; Psalm 54:2; Luke 8:21; 11:28; John 8:47; Acts 13:44; Romans 10:17; I Timothy 2:13). As Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God".

God's elect will fast — abstain periodically from food and drink for a day or more — as Jesus instructed the disciples to observe a fast: not if, but when (Matthew 6:16). Then He stated,

"Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast" (Matthew 9:15; NKJV).

The Bridegroom has gone to the right hand of the Father, so we indeed need to fast as necessary, and the spirit within us will motivate us to do so. That fasting must be done as Isaiah 58:3-12 shows us.

Moreover, the elect will meditate [Hebrew *hagah*, "to utter a sound, moan, speak to oneself"] on His ways "... day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success" (Joshua 1:8; NKJV). David tied this "speaking to oneself day and night" to "delighting in the law of Yahweh (Psalm 1:2). He meditated upon God's ways much of the time (Psalm 63:6; 77:6; 119:15, 27, 48, 78, 148). Paul advised the Philippians to *meditate* [Greek *logizomai*, "to think upon, ponder"] on whatever is noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, or praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). In a real sense, the spirit within the elect will motivate them to continually ponder the greatness of the creation, God's laws, and every other thing about our Maker and Sustainer.

God's elect will also be moved to fellowship with others possessing His spirit. The encouragement

received from those of like mind is highly important in our walk through this world's minefield of sin and deception, planted throughout the world by the adversary (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42; I Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11; Revelation 12:9).

Knowing God's People

You will know them by their fruits, the good works they do, their service to others, and love and humility. You will know them because they keep God's laws, including the Sabbath day. They will strive to pray diligently, study God's word, meditate on His ways, and fast when needed. They will feel remorse when they become aware of "missing the mark," and change to do what is right.

They also will possess a spirit of boldness when facing the world: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (II Timothy 1:7). They will react to persecution like

No servant of God will always show perfection in these ways of His on every front and at all times. We all fall short. Yet, the desire to perfect the self will never leave someone who possesses the holy spirit. When knocked down He will get up (Proverbs 24:16; Psalm 145:14). When having failed in the world's sight he will understand that such difficulty is part of the growth process as arranged by his Creator (Romans 8:28; Hebrews 12:5-13; II Corinthians 12:7-9). Though cast off by the world (John 15:18-25, Matthew 10:22; 24:9), he will always understand that His Creator has not left him ... will never leave him (Matthew 28:20).

Be assured that if your daily walk is seasoned with the desire to emulate the life of Christ, and you are striving to overcome your selfish nature and put on perfection, you are amongst the called of our Creator. Your future is to be a king and a priest and to reign on the earth for a thousand years (Revelation 5:10).

You will not let the fear of men and their peer pressure force you to capitulate to society's mores around you. You are His, and the love to your brethren and to all of mankind around you will prove it! Moreover, you will strive to keep out the world's influences that attempt to submerge the character of the Creator within you, for as Isaiah 33:14-15 states,



Perhaps the old adage, “Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil” has its roots in Scripture, but in any case it is the admonition in Isaiah 33:14-15 to avoid letting evil thoughts enter your mind. It is from evil thoughts that sin has its origins, sin that must be rooted out so we might truly be the new creatures destined to “dwell with the devouring fire.”

“Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, who stops his ears from bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil” (NKJV).

This man fears God, not men, and this man will be taught in the ways that the Eternal chooses. He will dwell in prosperity, his descendants will inherit the earth, and the hidden secrets of God and His covenant will be revealed to him (Psalm 25:12-14). What an incredible future lies in store for the people God has called and chosen!