



4050 80th Avenue North, Pinellas Park, Fl

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SKYVIEW BULLETIN

IDENTITY THEFT



We are constantly warned about identity theft. We are encouraged to change passwords frequently and to not open any link on our computers that are unknown to us. We are cautioned about using our credit cards and debit cards in a way that would allow someone access to personal financial information. We are told never to give out personal information over the telephone. We have probably, no doubt, received official looking Emails from a Website posing as a bank or other financial institution telling us that our account has been suspended because of suspicious activity and they want us to re-register our personal information. I receive these all the time.

It is reported that ID theft is the fastest growing crime in the United States. In September 2003, 10 million people in the US were victims of identity fraud. From 2003 through 2009 the average has been about 10 million victims yearly. There was an increase of ID theft of 22% from 2007 to 2009. The average victim of ID theft loses between \$1800 and \$14000. It takes on an average, between 840 hours to 1300 hours, to clear up our personal information after we have been victimized. Even worse is losing our identity to a criminal who uses our good name and personal information in the commitment of crime. I hope no one who is reading this will ever be the victim of ID theft. ID theft is awful!

But there is another kind of ID theft that concerns me more than the one discussed above. There is an identity that we can lose that will have much greater and farther-reaching results than the lose of personal financial information.

As a Christian, we have a special identity—an identity that separates us from the rest of the world. This identity set us apart as the disciples or followers of Christ. Peter tells us, *you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ* (1 Peter 2:5). Also notice verse nine: *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.*

Notice that we are identified as a *“holy and royal priesthood, a spiritual house, a chosen people, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.”* God made the promise through His prophet Isaiah that His people would be given a new identity. They would be known as “sons and daughters,” and would be given an everlasting name (Isaiah 52:5). This “name” would be a new name; *“The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow”* (Isaiah 62:2). This “new name” was first used to identify God’s people after the first Gentile convert to Christ. *“And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch* (Acts 11:26). (See back page)

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MEN WE SUPPORT

**William Stewart—Kingston, Canada
Bob Owen — Trip to Europe
Mike Mendez —trip to Cuba**

WORSHIP TIMES

SUNDAY

**Worship.....9:30 A.M.
Classes.....10:50 A.M.
Worship.....6:00 P.M.**

WORSHIP PLACE

**4050 80th Ave N
PO Box 3118
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These descriptive terms, given to Christians, identify us as God's children. They set us apart from the world. In 1 Peter 2:9, the word "peculiar" is used in the King James Version which means "belonging to." We are a people who belong to God and we have a very special identity as the disciples of Christ.

But, the devil wants to steal our identity. He does not want others to know that we are followers of Christ. In fact, Satan will do everything within his power to convince us to "blend in" with the world so that no will know we are a Christian.

When we do not conduct ourselves as a Christian should, Satan has stolen our ID. We are told in Philippians 1:27, that our conduct is to be worthy of the gospel of Christ. When we dress like the rest of the world, when we talk like the rest of the world, when we live like the rest of the world, our identity as a Christian has been stolen by the devil.

A warning is given about the loss of our identity as a Christian. *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephesians 5:3-5).* Paul in this context tells us that when we are involved in this list of sins, we have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. This means we have no identity as a Christian—God will not be able to identify us as belonging to Him.

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We cannot do these things and still be identified as a Christian. I have talked to people about becoming a Christian and some have mentioned some church member by name and made the comment, "If that's what a Christian is, I don't want to be one." What is the problem? This church member has lost their identity as a child of God. They no longer possess that exclusiveness that separates them from the world.

Notice how we have to guard our identity as sons and daughters of God: *"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."* (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). To be identified as "sons and daughters, we have to separate ourselves from the world. .

Does the world know that you are a Christian? Does your next door neighbor know you are a Christian? Do the people you work with know you are a Christian? Do fellow students at school know you are a Christian? Do you stand out as one of God's peculiar people, or do you just blend in with the rest of the crowd?

The answers to these questions are important. It may be tragic to lose money because of ID fraud. But it is worse to lose our spiritual identity as a Christian. We can, with hard work, gain back our losses due to the theft of our physical ID. But, if we lose our spiritual identity and we do not gain it back our loss will go with us into eternity. Christians are admonished: *"to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:22-24).* We are also told: *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret" (Ephesians 5:11-13).*

Does the world identify you as a Christian, or has the devil stolen your identity? I saw a little sign hanging in an office that raised this question: **"If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"** What a thought provoking question! Do not allow the devil to entice you to blend in with the rest of the world. Act, talk, dress like a Christian should and have the attitude of a Christian. Be identified as a "holy nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, a spiritual house, a person belonging to God."

If we maintain our identity as a Christian in this life, then God will recognize us when we stand before Him in judgment. May he never have to say, "Depart from me, I don't know who you are" (Matthew 7:23)



**Adult
Auditorium
New class
beginning in
January:
The Life Of Christ**

**GOD'S
PLAN OF SALVATION**
Believe—Heb. 11:6
Repent—Luke 13:3
Confess—Rom. 10:9
**Be Baptized—
Mk.16:16, Acts 2:38,
1 Pet. 3:21**