

## WE ARE GOD'S PEOPLE

### I. READ TEXT—EXODUS 2:23-35; 3:7-10

**2:23** Now it came about in *the course of* those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the **sons of Israel** sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of *their* bondage rose up to God. **24** So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **25** God saw **the sons of Israel**, and God took notice *of them*. . . . **7** The LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of **My people** who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. **8** So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. **9** Now, behold, the cry of the **sons of Israel** has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them. **10** Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring **My people**, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

### II. WHO WAS ISRAEL—WHO DID IT BECOME—AND WHO ARE WE?

#### A. KEY TURNING POINT FOR ISRAEL

1. Like Abram's 'call' (Gen 12)
  - He did not know who he really was
  - He thought of himself as a shepherd
  - Identified himself with his lineage—son of Terah
  - His name was Abram—'great father'
  - God was making him into Abraham—'father of many nations'
  - But Abraham's real identity was—to be God's
2. Exodus 3 was the beginning of Israel's collective 'call'
  - God used this crisis to reveal their new identity
  - God then called them to an entirely new role

#### B. OLD IDENTITY AND ROLE

1. How Israelites saw themselves
  - a. Overwhelmed by their **role**—slaves under oppression
  - b. Identified themselves as—"children of Israel"—under affliction
  - c. Background and meaning of name 'Israel'
    1. Literal meaning = 'God prevails'
    2. Given Jacob after wrestling with God at Peniel—**Ge 32:28**
    3. Later confirmed at Bethel—**Ge 35:10-15**

4. Meaning for Jacob and descendants

- ‘one who prevails’—or—‘contender’
- ‘soldiers of God’

d. Meaning of ‘Israel’ for Jacob and descendants

2. But God had new plans for Israel

a. A new **role**—their destiny was *not* to remain slaves

b. A new **purpose**

- God was setting them free for a greater purpose
- To worship Him—in the wilderness
- This purpose gives a *hint* about Israel’s new role

c. They also needed a new **identity!**

3. It was not enough just to be ‘Israel’

a. Their reputation would not depend on past lineage—but on present power!

b. The Canaanites did not fear Abraham or Jacob’s people

c. But they *did* fear the **God** who delivered them miraculously

**Josh 2:8-11**—8 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof 9 and said to them, ‘I know that the LORD has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. 10 We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. 11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

**Josh 5:1**—Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the LORD had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until they had crossed over, their hearts melted in fear and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.

d. It was the same in Jesus’ day—according to John the Baptist

**Mt 5:7-10**—7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

## C. GOD CHANGED THEIR IDENTITY

1. God identified them as ‘my people’
  - He heard the affliction of ‘my people’ in Egypt—**3:7**
  - He sent Moses to Pharaoh to bring ‘my people’ out of Egypt—**3:10**
  - He used Moses to tell Pharaoh—7 times—“let my people go”—**Ex 5-10**
2. God’s purpose in delivering them—was to establish a **twofold identity**

**Lev 26:11-13**—**11** I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you.

**12** I will walk among you and **be your God**, and you will be my people. **13** I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians; I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high.

- ❖ His identity = He would be their God
- ❖ Their identity = They would be His people

3. Act of God’s **grace**—a chosen and special people

**Dt 7:6**—Of all the people on earth God has chosen you, a **special** people

4. IMPORTANT—identity is linked to worship and service (praise):

**Ps 100**— Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. **Serve** the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are **his people**, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with **praise**: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

## D. CONDITIONS OF THIS IDENTITY

1. OLD COVENANT

- a. Based on **Grace**

1. God chose Israel them—not based on their works—but gracious, free choice
2. Gave them the Law
  - Moral law—10 commandments
  - Ceremonial law—Levitical code of offerings and sacrifices
3. But the Law was a **gift**—for their own **good**—for their **prosperity**—**Josh 1**
4. Basis of salvation
  - a. The Law and sacrifices did not save them

- b. Salvation came by being in right relationship with God
- 5. But keeping the Law was essential for the Israel
  - a. Keeping the Law **identified** them as the People of God
  - b. It set them apart from all other peoples

b. **Conditional** Covenant = **Obedience**

**Lev 26:12**—keep my commandments, and I will walk among you and be your God, and you will **be my people**

**I Kings 16:12**—if you keep my commandments, I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake **my people** Israel

Re-affirmed in **Jer 7:23**  
**Jer 11:4**  
**Ez 11:20**  
**Ez 37:24-28**

c. Covenant with the Promise of **Forgiveness**—to *My People*

**I Chr 7:14**—If **my people who are called by my name** will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sins, and heal their land.

d. Not legalism—but a genuine desire to please God

**Micah 6:6-8**—**6** With what shall I come to the LORD *and* bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? **7** Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn *for* my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? **8** He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

2. THE NEW COVENANT

a. New Covenant Promised

1. Covenant of the heart—not of stone
2. Emphasizing our **relationship** with God
3. This became new basis of identifying the **people of God**

**Jer 31:33**—But this will be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, says the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Reaffirmed in **Jer 32:38-40**  
**Ez 36:26-28**

b. Fulfillment of New Covenant

1. Fulfillment of Legal Condition—by Christ

**Mt 5:17**—Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to destroy them, but to fulfill them.

2. Fulfillment of Relational Condition—by whoever receives Christ

**Jn 1:12-13**—Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— **13** children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

c. Identity in the New Covenant

1. The People of God = the New Israel

2. **Anyone** who will respond—extends beyond the Old Israel

**Rom 9:26**—And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, you are not my people; there shall they be called the **children of the living God**.

d. Nature of the New Covenant Identity

1. An **inward** relationship

2. God walks with us personally

**II Cor 6:16**—for you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be **my people**.

e. Condition of being New Covenant People of God

1. Same as the Old Covenant = Obedience

**Jn 15:10**—If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

2. Jesus reduced this to two Great Commandments—**Mk 12:28-31**

- Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength
- Love your neighbor as yourself

3. The nature of this 'Condition'

a. Trusting Christ—not obedience is not the **basis** of salvation

b. But trust *must* **result** in obedience—or it is nothing but words

- c. So obedience is the condition that gives evidence of faith!
- e. Evidence of Identity
  - 1. Jesus gave a third—new commandment
  - 2. Obedience to this command is what distinguishes us from everyone else

**Jn 13:34-35—34** A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **35** By this everyone will know that you are **my disciples**, if you love one another.

## E. OUR IDENTITY--SUMMARY

- **WE ARE**—God’ people—His children
- **WE BECOME HIS**—receiving—**trusting** His Son—who fulfilled the Law for us
- **CONDITION WE FULFILL** = we obey by loving God and loving our neighbor
- **EVIDENCE** = we love one another—as He has loved us

## III. WHAT WAS ISRAEL’S ROLE—AND WHAT IS OURS?

### A. WHAT WAS ISRAEL’S ROLE?

- 1. Israel saw itself—as slaves
  - Oppressed and afflicted
  - Powerless and without hope
- 2. God heard their cry—and decided to act
  - He remembered His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
  - To make them a great nation—and to be a blessing
  - So he changed Israel’s role in order to fulfill that promise
- 3. Gradual revelation of the new role
  - a. **Two clues** point to this new role
  - b. They are found in God’s two purposes in setting them free
    - 1. **First purpose** = to WORSHIP GOD

- a. This is what God told Moses to tell Israel

**Ex 3:18**—The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.’

- b. God linked their identity to this purpose

1. The ‘children of Israel’ were *His* children—*His People*
2. He told Pharaoh—their first purpose was to worship Him

**Ex 4:21-23—21** The LORD said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. **22** Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, **23** and I told you, “Let my son go, so he may worship me.” But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.’”

## 2. **Second purpose** = to SERVE GOD

- a. God linked Israel’s identity to this purpose
  1. **Seven** times Moses said for God to Pharaoh, “Let **my people** go.”
  2. Seven times, Moses added, “that they may serve me”

## 4. Final revelation of Israel’s new role

- a. Only one role could accomplish both these two purposes
- b. God finally revealed the new role
  - *After* they arrived in the wilderness—where they were to worship/serve
  - Just *before* He gave them the 10 commandments—their new charter
  - Just *before* they washed their clothes and God consecrated the whole nation
- c. The new role—personified their new purposes—to be **priests!**

**Ex 19:3-6— 3** Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, “This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: **4** ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. **5** Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, **6** you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

## 5. From **slaves** to **priests**

- God called them to worship and serve Him
- And to be a blessing to all nations—fulfilling Abraham’s call

## B. WHAT IS OUR ROLE?

1. We have a **new identity**

**I Pe 2:10**--in time past [we] were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

2. So—we also are **priests**—with two functions: to **worship** and **serve**

3. Our **first purpose** as priests = to serve **God**

**Rev 1:6**—Jesus Christ has made us kings and priests *unto God*

**Rev 5:10**—the Lamb has made us *unto God* kings and priests

4. Our **second purpose** as priests = to serve **others**

**I Pe 2:9**—But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

5. Two aspects of being priests

a. **Collective** people of God = the priesthood of all believers

We **gather** together as the **body of Christ** to worship and serve Him

b. **Individual** responsibility = the priesthood of every believer

We **depart** individually to worship Him by serving others

### C. OUR ROLES AS GOD'S PEOPLE—SUMMARY

- **WE HAVE A NEW IDENTITY**—we are now the people of God
- **WE HAVE A NEW ROLE**—we are priests
- **WE HAVE TWO PURPOSES**—to serve and worship
- **WE SERVE/WORSHIP GOD**—as the gathered priesthood/body of Christ
- **WE WORSHIP GOD BY SERVING OTHERS**—going as individual priests