

How We Become the People of God

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Today we continue in our series of the wonderful works of God and we're leaving Genesis and Abraham behind and we're going to look at this in the life of Moses and what God did in that generation. We'll be reading selected portions of the text so please follow along on the screen or in your bulletin starting in chapter two we read. During those many days the king of Egypt died and the people of Israel groaned because of the slavery and cried out for help.

The cry for rescue from slavery came up to God and God heard their groaning and God remembered his covenant with Abraham with Isaac and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel and God knew.

Then in chapter six. But the Lord said to Moses now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh for with a strong hand he will send them out and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land. God spoke to Moses and said to him I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan the land in which they live as sojourners.

Moreover I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will deliver you from slavery to them and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people and I will be your God and you shall know that I am the Lord your God who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you for possession. I am the Lord. From chapter 7 to 11 we read of God's great acts of judgment in the form of nine terrible plagues upon the Egyptians.

Despite this Pharaoh continued refusing to let the Israelites go and the tenth and final plague was imminent. So in chapter 12. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt this month shall be for you the beginning of months.

[2 : 3 6] It shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their father's houses.

A lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons. According to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb.

Your lamb shall be without blemish a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night roasted on the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it.

Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water but roasted its head with its legs and its inner parts and you shall let none of it remain until the morning.

[3 : 46] Anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. In this manner you shall eat it with your belt fastened your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand and you shall eat it in haste.

It is the Lord's Passover for I will pass through the land of Egypt that night and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt both man and beast and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments.

I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are and when I see the blood I will pass over you and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon and all the firstborn of the livestock and Pharaoh rose up in the night he and all his servants and all the Egyptians and there was a great cry in Egypt where there was not a house where someone was not dead and he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said up go out from among my people both you and the people of Israel and go serve the Lord as you have said take your flocks and your herds as you have said and be gone and bless me also.

This is the word of God. Great. Thank you Margot and Celeste.

[5 : 22] Well great to be back with you and if you are new great to have you with us this morning. Let me pray for us briefly and then we're going to dive in. Father God we say this every week but as we come to your word we want to hear you speaking to us.

We are not in the slight bit interested in the opinions of man. We're not here for a pep talk just to encourage us. We're not here just to hear some wisdom to help us in our lives.

We want to encounter you the living God through your word. And so God we pray by your spirit may your spirit and your word work together God. As we look at your word may your spirit be writing it on our hearts.

God come and reveal yourself to us. Make us known and make yourself known to us this morning through your word we pray. We want to love you and know you better. We want to trust you and follow you. And so come and help us to do that.

God build our faith build our love for you build our trust in you this morning. We pray this in your great name. Amen. Well we are continuing the series as solicit the wonderful work of God and what we're doing is we're zooming out and looking at the whole storyline of the Bible.

[6 : 33] We want to see the narrative arc of the Bible from beginning to end. And the reason we're doing this is we want to understand what the Bible is about.

We don't just come to the Bible to learn a little bit of wisdom some insight here and there some bits of advice to help us get along with our lives. God is wanting to speak to us.

But in order to understand it we need to know what's going on. Incidentally one of the things you find when you read the whole Bible is you discover it's actually not about you.

We tend to think the Bible is about us. God's giving us some wisdom some advice. Actually the Bible is about God and what He's doing. It's about the wonderful work of God. But the other thing is many of us will know little sections of the Bible.

We'll know some stories. We'll know some teaching. Maybe some of the words of Jesus. But it's really hard to make sense of those individual parts unless you know where into the big picture they fit in.

[7 : 31] It's easy to misinterpret them. To misunderstand them. To think they're saying one thing but actually in light of the context it's saying something else. And so we're doing this series you want to see what is God saying in His Bible.

And so two weeks ago we started in Genesis 1 to 2 1 to 3 and we saw that God has a plan for humanity. He has a design. And His design is that God's people live under His rule experiencing His blessing and His favor as they live in the place that He's assigned for them.

But we also saw that unfortunately this plan has got messed up because of humanity's sin. Sin has ruined everything in our world.

It's ruined our experience of the world. and so now God's plan is kind of out of kilter in a way. We are no longer God's people no longer living under His rule and therefore no longer experiencing His blessing.

The world is nothing like what it's meant to be. But then last week we saw but just because humanity messed things up doesn't mean that God's plan is off course or in trouble.

[8 : 46] God is still working all things according to the purpose of His will. God is sovereign and His plan will come to pass. And so we saw that God is still going to form a people bring them under His rule so that they can experience His blessing and His favor.

And the way that God does this is He starts off He chooses a man. A man by the name of Abram and God makes him a promise. And the promise is that through Abram and his descendants his offspring God is going to form a community of people a new community of people and these people will live under His rule and experience His blessing and His favor but it won't end with them through this community this tribe this family all the nations of the world will one day ultimately be blessed.

From Hong Kong to South America every nation will be blessed through what God is going to do through this family of Abram. And so God is starting to reverse the effects of the curse and the fall.

Humanity lives kind of under sin's curse God is going to bring a group of people out from under that under His rule to experience His blessing and His grace. And so the rest of that's what we looked at last week Neil's looked at that the rest of Genesis is the story of Abram's family and Abram has a son Isaac and they have a son Jacob and eventually the family starts to grow and grow and grow and we see God's plan starting to bear fruit.

Well today we come to the second book of the Bible Exodus and the beginning of Exodus it starts off and it tells us that this family tree of Abram is growing and it's a sizable tribe and so we start off in chapter 1 verse 7 says this the people of Israel that's the descendants of Abram were fruitful and increased greatly they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong so that the land was full of them shows that God's promise to Abram is starting to take shape this childless couple Abram and Sarah have become a sizable tribe but the problem is the rest of the promise about coming under God's rule and experiencing his favor and his blessing that still seems like a very far way off it seems like a bit of a pipe dream that nobody really knows how it's going to happen because they are sizable but they're not living in God's promised land they're living in Egypt and they're not under God's gracious rule they're under the rule of Pharaoh and Pharaoh is a bit of a tyrannical king and they're not experiencing God's favor and his blessing no they're experiencing

[11 : 22] Pharaoh's hardship and so God's people the Israelites are in misery they are suffering they are in hardship and so the question is this what is God doing how is God going to bring his promises to bear or maybe has God forgotten his promises were his promises an exaggeration that are maybe just one step too far what is God doing and how is he going to keep his promises what we see today is God is slowly working all things according to the purpose of his will and the first thing he's going to do is he's going to form a people he's going to form a people he's going to take the descendants of Abraham this rather sorry bunch of murderous deceitful backstabbing broken family and these people that are a bit of a mess he's going to form them into his people his chosen people and so how's God going to do that well he's going to do a couple of things but maybe before we look at youth let me ask you if you are a high schooler maybe

I can ask you what does it mean to be part of God's people how would you know whether you're part of God's people maybe you're not sure if you're a Christian this morning how would you know what it would look like to be part of God's people well I think this passage is going to tell us and so God is going to form a people he's going to do it in a bunch of stages look at the first thing he does the first thing is revelation God reveals himself before God does anything for them the first thing he's going to do is he's going to reveal himself to them so in chapter 3 we didn't read it but the story picks up like this Moses is out in the wilderness he's in the desert and there's a story how he gets there I'll tell you that in a few minutes time he's out in the wilderness looking after sheep not a very exciting job and one day God chooses to reveal himself to Moses in the most unusual way Moses is following a sheep and there's a tree that's on fire but it's not burning up it's just the leaves are still green but it's on fire and Moses draws near and as he does

God calls to him audibly Moses Moses and then he says this I am the God of your fathers the God of Abraham the God of Isaac the God of Jacob now notice Moses is not looking for God he's just looking for his sheep but God is looking for Moses God takes the initiative when Moses is not interested in God takes initiative and reaches out and calls him to himself and what does he say how does he reveal himself to Moses he says I am the God of your fathers five or six times he says I'm the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob he's saying I'm the God of the promise I'm the one who all those 400 years ago spoke to Abraham I haven't forgotten in fact I think we read it in chapter 6 it says God remembered his covenant to Abraham that doesn't mean that he had forgotten and suddenly he's like oh yeah actually I made a promise no it means God is about to fulfill it God reveals himself as the God of the promise says that chapter 2

God heard their cry he remembered his covenant that's what God does he draws near and he says Moses I want you to know me now incidentally it's not only Moses that God wants to reveal himself to he also is going to reveal himself to all the Egyptians in the plagues that Margot told us about we didn't read about all of them but almost every time there's a plague God says this is being done then all the world will know that I am the Lord in the midst of all the earth God wants Pharaoh to know who he is he says Moses says to Pharaoh God is sending these plagues that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God why does God keep on bringing plague after plague after plague even though he's the one who's hardening Pharaoh's heart sometimes it feels a bit unfair right God keeps on doing this the reasons he wants to reveal himself to Israel and to Egypt to all the watching world that he is the one true God above all the gods of Egypt so Egypt have multiple gods and each plague

God is picking them off saying no no I'm actually the God of that no I'm the God of the water I'm the God of creation I'm the God of the sun the moon and the stars I am the one true God but it's not only Moses and Pharaoh who need to know so do God's people and so Moses God says to Moses I'm going to send you back to Egypt and you are going to deliver my people and Moses says okay so I go back and who do I tell them is sending me I mean Egypt's got lots of gods what is your name and God gives himself the most unusual name it's the name I am or I am what I am I am who I am it's a very unusual name who is sending you I am is sending me in Hebrew I think we'd say Yahweh or in English sometimes we say Jehovah but it really in English it means I am it's an unusual name but what does it mean well it means many things on the one hand it means I am the limitless

[16 : 47] God I'm the God who has no restraints no constraints I'm not the God of this nation or this nation of this culture or this people group I simply am the one true God I'm not the God of the sun or the moon or fertility or the crops or the water I simply am I am the one divine being over all existence I am who I am I'm simply the self-existing God I am the one true God I am but in addition to that scholars say there's something else going on here in almost all ancient civilizations the gods were defined by their characteristics about certain characteristics so the God who does this the God of this aspect of life when

God says I am he seems to be saying if you want to know who I am you won't find out by any words or description or by going to the temple or through any priest the way you find out who I really am is by watching my actions God who are you I am the God who acts in history God will be found out or reveals himself not through any description or through any sacred text but through his actions I am who I am and what they will come to know God through what he is about to do and what is God about to do well he's about to rescue them who is God he is the rescuing God so when Moses says who are you God in a sense answers by saying this is who I am watch what I am about to do and what is he going to do he's going to rescue his people and that's the second thing we see how is

God going to form his people what does it mean to be part of the people of God well firstly he reveals himself to them he calls them he makes himself known to them but secondly he rescues them he is the rescuing God look at if you got your bulletin chapter 6 verse 6 to 7 we are going to look at this scripture quite a lot this kind of shapes much of the sermon God says this in verses 6 and 7 he says Moses so what's happened here Moses has gone back he spoken to Pharaoh and Pharaoh has made things worse and now the Israelites are upset with Moses because Moses is making things Yahweh or I am who I am I will bring you out from under the Egyptians I will deliver you from slavery I will redeem you with an outstretched arm with great acts of judgment then you will know that I am the Lord your God so how are

God's people going to know who God is how they are going to figure out who is this God well they are going to see what he is going to do and what is he doing well he says here three times I will bring you out I will deliver you I will redeem you the way they are going to know who God is is not through description but through watching his actions he is going to rescue them and of course that's the whole point of exodus isn't it that God is going to who are under Pharaoh's slavery and things are getting worse the more Moses speaks to Pharaoh to say let God's people go the worse things get Pharaoh cracks the whip even harder until one point even Moses has his doubts and Moses cries out and says God what are you doing where are you I thought you meant to save your people and things are just getting worse but look at what God says

I will deliver my people I will redeem them I will bring them up I will set them free one of the reasons why it takes so long for God's people to get delivered and why the more they try things get worse and why Pharaoh keeps on saying no no no no ten times or nine times is because God wants his people to be under no illusions as to who rescued them and Niels pointed this out to me this week but imagine if God had changed Pharaoh's heart so after the first instant Pharaoh said sure okay you can go no problem I mean what would the Israelites have thought oh Pharaoh is such a nice guy I mean he was a little harsh in the beginning but no he is actually not such a bad guy after he let us go right or maybe they would have thought Moses is great diplomacy I mean they go into wilderness and they build a golden statue of

[21 : 58] Moses and they would bow down to Moses right this great leader that set them free God wants them to be under no illusions who it is that sets them free it wasn't Pharaoh and it wasn't Moses it was the one true God God is the one who rescued them if you know the story of Exodus in chapter 2 this is how Moses ends up in the wilderness in chapter 2 Moses is a prince in Egypt he actually grew up in Pharaoh's household and one day he sees an Egyptian attacking an Israelite and he thinks this is not right his heart stirs up and he runs to the defense of the Israelite and he beats the Egyptian he ends up killing the Egyptian and he rescues the Israelites from this cruel hand of the Egyptian and Moses thinks my people are going to recognize me I'm a deliverer they're going to thank me but what happens the next day the

Israelites turn on him rather than thanking him they turn on him and things end disastrously because Pharaoh hears that Moses has killed an Egyptian and Pharaoh puts a Moses runs for his life and flees from Egypt and ends up in the wilderness for 40 years looking after his father in his sheep and so here's Moses thinking I'm going to be this great deliverer I'm going to rescue God's people no no if you try you will mess it up God says the point is God will use Moses but Moses will not deliver God's people God is the one who rescues and what does God rescue them from on the one hand he rescues them from slavery right you read that earlier I will deliver you from slavery right in the beginning God says I have seen my people suffering I've heard their groans I know what's going on I have come down I will rescue them but he also rescues them from judgment and look at verse 6 again of chapter 6 with us

God says I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment and so let's read it earlier in chapter 12 God says on all the gods of Egypt I will execute my judgment God is going to judge all the inhabitants of Israel sorry of Egypt and it's going to affect everyone and how's this judgment going to come well the firstborn living family is going to come under God's judgment and is going to die the firstborn of Pharaoh on the throne the prisoner in prison the livestock out in the field the firstborn of every living creature of every family is going to come under God's judgment and is going to die except God is going to make a distinction and the distinction is not between the good and the bad the sinless and the sinful because actually everybody in

Egypt is sinners even God's people are sinners if you think about how they respond to Moses and God their hearts get hard they moan and grumble they shake their fists to God even God's people are sinners so God's going to make a distinction but it's not between the good and the bad the sinful and the sinless it's between those who trust him and because they trust him when judgment comes on Egypt God is going to pass over them so that they won't experience his judgment they will be saved God's enemies will be judged but those who trust him will be saved and how does this salvation come about how does this Passover come about well it comes about through sacrifice and substitute you see somebody else will shed their blood in their place some innocent life will die so that those who trust

God don't need to God says go out to the fields and take one of your lambs one per family and slaughter that lamb and that innocent lamb will shed his blood he will die and when you do that you take the blood from the lamb put it on the floor and you paint the door frames of your house you paint blood on the door frames on the tops and on the sides kind of like the shape of a cross but not exactly and when you do that when judgment comes on Egypt I will pass over your house and your family will be saved because a substitute will be sacrificed in your place and so those who trust God and believe in him and put their faith in God's word and his provision are passed over and they are saved by the blood of the lamb how God's people formed through revelation and through rescue but now notice what's the relationship between revelation and rescue the relationship is actually symbiotic symbiotic means they work together in some ways which one comes first does

[27 : 20] God reveal himself and then rescue or does he rescue and by rescuing reveal himself well actually the answer is both as God reveals himself to his people how does he reveal himself he says I am the God that's going to rescue you and as God rescues what is he doing he's revealing his nature and his character he's showing them who he is friends can you see what this means still today to be the people of God you need two things you need God to reveal himself and you need to be rescued by God who are God's people who are those that are part of God's kingdom those who have come to know him those that have been rescued see friends God doesn't just invite us into his kingdom like you invite somebody to your wedding you send out the invitation say please come oh be lovely if you could save people in his kingdom the good news of the

Bible is that God can save and God does save and God loves to save God delights in rescuing people friends can you see how this all points to Jesus why did Jesus come why did Jesus come down was it because he wanted to give us some good advice some good teaching to get us to see how the world has got a bit messed up and to put us back on the noble path towards enlightenment my friends Jesus didn't come to give us good advice or to just simply tell us how to live our lives Jesus came to reveal God to us to show us what God is like the apostle John says the word became flesh that Jesus and has dwelt amongst us and by seeing him we have seen the glory of the father the glory of the only son from the father who is full of grace and truth so

John saying because we've seen Jesus we've seen what God the father is like and what is God the father like he is full of truth righteousness justice holiness but he's also full of grace he's full of mercy he's long suffering he's full of patience Jesus came to show us reveal to us what God is like but how did Jesus reveal who God is and how God is like where do we most clearly see the glory of God in the face of Christ is it through his teachings is through his miracles no friends where is it it's on the cross right it's on Mount Calvary as Jesus nailed to the cross and dies friends we see the fullness that God is full of truth and justice and righteousness and God will judge sin in the world but we also see on the cross

God is full of grace and mercy and patience friends we may be tempted to think in the New Testament God is so full of grace and mercy he's not wrathful and judgmental like in the Old Testament don't you see on the cross God was pouring out his wrath he was pouring out his judgment on sin it's just that Jesus took our judgment and our wrath in our place so that those who trust in him it doesn't need to fall on us God will still save through judgment but he saves by pouring his judgment on Jesus our substitute in our place we sang earlier Julian led us in that song the one line says great and awesome is your name you know what the name Jesus means the name Jesus means God saves Jesus is the innocent life whose blood was shed in our place so that we can be saved how does

God form his people he does it through revealing himself making himself known calling us out of darkness into light he he forms a people through rescuing us and saving us there's one last thing he forms a people through relationship relationship once again we see God's people are rescued and saved but now what once they are out of Egypt should they simply thank God and go on their way well look at what Exodus 6 verse 6 to 8 says let's read it again we've read a couple of times God says this I am the Lord your God I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians I will deliver you from slavery to them I what is the point of

[32 : 27] God rescuing his people the point is relationship many years ago when I was about 8 or 9 years old I grew up in South Africa and I grew up inland in a place called Johannesburg and Christmas holidays we went to the beach to the seaside for Christmas holidays southern hemisphere Christmas time is summer not like Hong Kong we spend Christmas at the beach but this particular year Christmas day was a miserable day it was overcast it was windy it was just a terrible day but my family decided let's go to the beach anyway and fly some kites get some fresh air so we go out to the beach and there's nobody else on the beach my family alone I'm eight or nine years old I'm pretty bored with flying kites and so I say to my dad I'm going to go for a swim so I go into water we always swim at that beach I know that water fairly well but I didn't know there was a current like an underwater current that pulls you out so

I'm trying to catch some waves but before I know it and the last life guard is getting in his car about a driveway because the life guards think there's nobody on the beach nobody swimming we can go home and so he gets the guy's attention says please come and the life guard runs on the beach and gets in and pulls me out of the water and we all lived happily after I can't really remember exactly what happened but I'm pretty sure my parents were very grateful I'm sure they were very thankful right I can't remember what happened but I'm sure they thanked the guy profusely but here's the thing five minutes later that life guard got back in his car drove away and we never saw him again never spoke to him don't know who he is I don't know if he's still alive no recollection that was the end people thank you for saving me high five now

I will go on my way when God rescues his people he's it's the start of a lifelong relationship that will go on forever when God saves us it's the beginning of eternal relationship of knowing him and being known by him of loving him and being loved by him of ever deeper friendship and intimacy and closeness and joy of enjoying God forever and one of God's favorite sayings in the Old Testament is this I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of Egypt therefore have no other gods before me therefore be holy as I am holy therefore love your neighbor therefore welcome the sojourner and the foreigner and the exile and the poor and the marginalized into your community therefore know that I will be faithful to you as I was to your people I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of Egypt now let that shape our relationship going forward in chapter 12 we actually read it

God says this month will be the first month of the year forever God redefines the whole calendar around this day when he saved them because this is the thing that's going to mark their relationship forever what does it mean to be the people of God it means to know that you have been rescued and saved why does God rescue them not just out of compassion not just out of kindness but for relationship that they will be his people that he will be their God that they will know him and love him and enjoy him and glorify him and worship him and treasure him above everything else all the days of their life this is what the exodus is about God being faithful to his promise that he will form his people so friends what about us what should we do about this well let me close with two application questions very questions the first one are you part of the people of

God friends are you part of the people of God and if you think you are how would you know that have you come to see God for who he truly is have you felt God calling you maybe you're not a Christian this morning the fact that you're in church this morning is God calling you it's not a coincidence maybe God has brought you calling you like he called Moses but friends to be part of the people of God is also to know that he went to the cross for you to rescue you to save you to deliver you do you know that Jesus came not just to give you advice not just to give you wisdom not just to help you get along in life but he came to die on the cross that he might save you that he might take judgment for you so that judgment may pass over you that you can be saved friends going to church doesn't make you a

[37 : 46] Christian taking communion doesn't make you a Christian coming to Jesus as savior believing in him and trusting in him is what saves you but then here's the other question this is probably applicable to most of us if you are a Christian how is your relationship with God is it alive is it vivid is it real is it dynamic does it shape your life and your identity does what God did on the cross all those years ago define you as a person friends have you forgotten the wonder of your salvation have you become familiar with the gospel have you forgotten what it is that Jesus rescued you from have you become familiar with calvary friends what God is doing in the exodus is he is forming a people he is saving and rescuing a people that those people may come under his rule and experience his blessing but it all starts with being rescued and saved

God doesn't just invite us into his kingdom he rescues us into his kingdom let me give us 30 seconds to think and ponder those questions then I'm going to pray for us and we're going to respond in one last song let's take half a minute to think you heavenly father lord jesus christ wonderful spirit of god god we confess this morning it's so easy to become familiar and blasé with the old old story that you are god who loves us enough to rescue you so love the world god that you sent your son to die on the cross that we might be saved through him god i pray for each one of us this morning for those of us that aren't christians god reveal yourself to us open the eyes of our heart to see you to believe in you to trust in you god for those of us that are christians i pray that the wonder of jesus and the cross will be so real to us it will shape us and define us god i pray for us as a church may we ever be centered on the good news of you christ who you are and what you did for us god thank you for going to the cross thank you jesus that you the lamb of god was slain that we might be saved that you took the wrath and the judgment that we deserved that that we might be passed over and might be saved and rescued god i pray won't you help us and form us into the people of god and that you may work through us work in us and then work through us to bless the city with the gospel god may we celebrate and love the wonder of

Jesus and what you've done for us that you are faithful to your promises that in Christ Jesus all the promises of god are yes and amen you made these great promises to Abraham god you fulfill them in christ in you christ jesus all the promises are yes and amen we love you we thank you we celebrate and rejoice in you this morning your great name we pray amen