

1 Peter 2:4-10 (Part II)

Introduction

Last week, we saw that Jesus is the stone that ultimately lies in the path of every human being so that in the end we are all confronted by Him and must either come to Him for safety and refuge or else stumble over Him and be broken and perish forever. As those who have come to Jesus and believed in Him, our identity, and our lot in life is now completely determined and shaped by Him. We are now the people honored by God as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, but nevertheless rejected by men – even as Jesus was.

What Peter's been doing in this entire opening section of his letter is establishing our identity – who we are as a people. And the reason for this is that we won't be equipped to live and function in this foreign world where we're all residing as sojourners without a really strong and a conscious understanding of who we are – of how our identity—our entire understanding of ourselves—is now wholly shaped and determined by our relationship to Jesus Christ.

So what we have this morning is the climax of this most basic and wonderful reality of our identity **as a people** – a people who have believed in Jesus. Peter's been **contrasting** on the one hand those who **come to** the living stone and are being built up themselves as living stones and on the other hand those who **stumble over** the stone and are broken. “They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do,” Peter says...

I. 1 Peter 2:9a — But you...

When you hear these words, do you hear them addressed to you? Do we feel the full weight of these two words coming to us so that we know Peter's “**you**” is, in fact, all of **us**?

II. 1 Peter 2:9a — But you **are** a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession...

I can't imagine any titles that could possibly communicate any higher privilege or honor than these. You are chosen, royal, and holy. You are the King's priesthood in this world. You are a “race” of people, a distinct “nation,” a “people” for God's own possession. **You** are all of these things. And so these are things that cry out for us to think on them and to grasp their meaning more fully – which is why we're here this morning.

In order to do this, we have to go back to our Old Testament Scriptures. I can't emphasize enough how the depth of our understanding of the New Testament depends entirely on the depth of our familiarity with the Old Testament. In only the last twelve verses of Peter's letter he's alluded to, or quoted five different Old Testament passages – Isaiah 40, Psalm 34, Isaiah 28, Psalm 118, and Isaiah 8. And the thing about Peter's use of these passages is he doesn't just quote them as isolated proof texts. He quotes them in a way that assumes we understand their own context and the whole world of the Old Testament in which they live. He quotes them not as proof texts lifted out of context (as though we could read them in Peter and not worry about where they came from), but as passages rooted in the whole big picture of the Old Testament.

And then, on top of that, Peter seamlessly weaves together passages from entirely different books of the Old Testament so we marvel at the intricate unity of all of Scripture and we see how taken together, the Old Testament Scriptures are really foundational for our own understanding of who we are today in Christ. I can't emphasize enough how the depth of our understanding of the New Testament depends entirely on the depth of our familiarity with the Old Testament.

In the last twelve verses, Peter has alluded to or quoted five Old Testament passages. In the next two verses, Peter weaves together three more passages from Isaiah 43, Exodus 19, and Hosea chapters 1 and 2. He begins:

III. 1 Peter 2:9a — But you [*you!*] are a chosen race...

In that word, “chosen,” there's already room for everlasting reflection and praise. We read of Israel's election and choosing in Deuteronomy seven:

- Deuteronomy 7:7–8 — It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

In the same way, God **chose you**, not because of your works, but because of His own purpose and grace. (2 Tim. 1:9) This is the meaning of Paul's words in Ephesians chapter one:

- Ephesians 1:4 — [God] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world.

Whenever the New Testament writers speak of our chosenness, they're always assuming the rich history and background of the chosenness of Israel. So what do these two things have to do with each other? What's the relationship between Israel's chosenness under the Old Covenant and our chosenness today under the New Covenant?

Peter says that “**you** are a chosen *race*.” The Greek word for “race” is *genos*, and it's related to the word for begetting or giving birth (*gennao*). So a race of people is a people who have all originated or descended from one common ancestor. Since we're all descended from Adam, we can rightly say that there's only one human race. But after Adam we can also begin tracing our origin to different fathers and different families. In this sense, in the Old Testament there were many different “races,” but only one **chosen** race – the “race” of the Israelites, all descended in common from Abraham, from Isaac, and from Jacob. (cf. Phil. 3:5) So what can Peter mean when he says that “**you** are a **chosen race**?” Well, in the first place, all of us who've been begotten anew by God all have our common origin in God. We're all His offspring (cf. Isa. 53:10) and so we really are a brand new race of people (think of that!) – a race of people in which “there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.” (Col. 3:11; cf. Rom. 10:12; Gal. 3:28) **You** are a brand new race of people, and yet also, at the same time, not so new.

Peter's quoting from Isaiah 43 where God encourages the people living with the prospect of exile that one day, just like He brought them out of Egypt and into the promised land under Moses and Joshua, so He'll also bring them out of Babylon by an even mightier and more wonderful deliverance than before and lead them home to Zion.

- Isaiah 43:16–21 [cf. LXX] — Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to **my chosen [race]**...

So what does it mean when Peter quotes this passage in Isaiah and applies it **to you**, identifying **you** as this “chosen race”? It doesn't mean we've taken Israel's place. It simply means that we've been grafted in with all the **believing** Jews so that now we are all, together, this “chosen race,” and now we're all together *experiencing* the fulfillment of this promised liberation from Babylon and return to Zion, the city of God. Do you see how Peter is explaining our **identity**, today, in light of the fulfillment of these Old Testament prophecies? Brothers and sisters, “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, [God has done] a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? [He has made] a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild beasts... honor [Him], the jackals and the ostriches, for [He has given] water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to [you] His **chosen race**...” How encouraging do you think this would be to Peter's readers living as sojourners and foreigners in this world (cf. 1 Pet 1:1; 2:11) and receiving this letter from “Babylon,” the capital of their foreign exile? (cf. 1 Pet. 5:13) You *are* a chosen race; and *as* this chosen race, you are the recipients today of all God's promises to ancient Israel.

After starting with Isaiah 43, now Peter weaves in a quotation from Exodus chapter 19.

IV. 1 Peter 2:9a — But **you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation...**

In Exodus 19 we see the people of Israel all gathered together at the foot of Mount Sinai, and the Lord gives Moses this message to speak to the people:

- Exodus 19:5–6 [cf. LXX] — “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; **and you shall be to me a [royal priesthood] and a holy nation.**” These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.

Within the nation of Israel, there was the special priesthood of the Levites, but here God says that the entire nation of Israel will also be to Him a royal priesthood – **if** they obey His voice and keep His covenant. To be a royal priesthood meant that Israel had special and exclusive access to God – the King of kings and Lord of lords, the ruler of all nations and all creation. And how did Israel have this awesome access to God? It was through their knowledge and their possession of His **covenant** (the law of Moses) and the presence of His **tabernacle** in their midst. A royal

priesthood is all about the exclusive **possession** of the **true service** and the **true worship** of the **one true God**. And so the nation of Israel was **also** the only place where the rest of the world could come to learn the ways of God and to be taught about His worship. There was no other place on earth where the service and worship of God could be seen, or taught, or learned – only in the royal priesthood of Israel with its exclusive, special access to the King.

But remember that very big “*if*” – “**If** you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant...” Only Israel didn’t, and so Israel wasn’t, in the end, God’s royal priesthood as they were intended to be. So what does it mean, then, when Peter quotes these words from Exodus 19 and applies them **to you**, identifying **you** as this “royal priesthood”? It doesn’t mean we’ve taken Israel’s place. It just means that now we’ve been grafted in with all the **believing Jews** so that now **we** are **all together** the **fulfillment** of this royal priesthood that God called Israel to be. (cf. Isa. 61:5-6; 66:20-21) Through faith in Jesus, we are now covenant-**keepers**, and so now “*this*” (the church) truly is the only place on earth where the service and worship of God can be seen, and taught, and learned (cf. 1 Tim. 3:14-15) – only here in this royal priesthood that we are, with the special, exclusive access to God that only we enjoy.

You are a “royal priesthood,” and “**a holy nation...**” So Peter continues quoting from Exodus 19. If Israel was a distinct “**race**” (*genos*; genus) because of their common family descent, they were also to be a distinct “**nation**” (*ethnos*; ethnicity) because of the customs they all shared in common. (cf. Achtemeier) The way of life that Israel was to share and practice together was a way of life given to them and revealed to them by God and so it was this way of life that marked them out as God’s holy nation. Only, Israel rejected God’s purposes for them, and adopted instead the customs and the ways of the surrounding nations. So what does it mean when Peter quotes **these words** from Exodus 19 and applies them **to you**? It doesn’t mean we’ve taken Israel’s place. It means that we’ve been grafted in with all the believing Jews so that now **we** are **all together** the fulfillment of this holy nation that God called Israel to be. The customs and way of life that we now all share and practice together have been given to us by God, identifying us and marking us out as a “holy nation,” and:

V. 1 Peter 2:9a — ...a people [*laos*] for his own possession [*peripoiesis*]...

And now Peter seems to be alluding to two Old Testament passages at the same time: Exodus 19 and also Isaiah 43 – the passage he originally started out with. Remember what God said to Israel at Mount Sinai after He brought them out from Egypt:

- Exodus 19:5–6 [cf. LXX] — If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be **my special** [*periousios*] **people** [*laos*] **among all peoples** [OR: “**a people for my own possession among all peoples**” (cf. Titus 2:14)].

And then remember what God says to Israel in Isaiah when He promises that one day He’ll bring them out from Babylon in a deliverance even more wonderful than the first:

- Isaiah 43:18–21 [cf. LXX] — I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert... to give drink to my chosen race, **the people** [*laos*] **whom I obtained** [*peripoieo*] **for myself**.

In the Old Testament (LXX) this Greek word for “people” that we have in Exodus and Isaiah is never once used of Gentiles, but only of God’s special people Israel. So what does it mean, then, when Peter uses not only this word for “people,” but even the language of a special people for God’s own possession from Exodus 19 and Isaiah 43 and then applies all of this language **to us**? Now, **you are** this **people** for God’s own (special) possession. We haven’t replaced Israel, but we **have** been grafted in with all believing Jews. **You** have been given the full privilege and status of being in every way that **special people** that Israel was originally called to be.

If we’re a distinct “**race**” (*genos*) because we all have our common **origin** in God, and if we’re a distinct “**nation**” (*ethnos*) because of the **customs** we share in common as a people consecrated and set apart by our holy God, then we’re also a distinct “**people**” (*laos*) because we’re set apart to God for a common **purpose and goal**. (cf. Goppelt) What is our reason for existing as a people for God’s own special possession? Peter started out by quoting from Isaiah 43; then he quoted from Exodus 19; then he drew from **both** Exodus 19 **and** Isaiah 43, and now he’s set himself up perfectly for yet another quote from Isaiah 43.

VI. 1 Peter 2:9b — But **you** are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, **that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light**.

By this point, should we even need to be told that this is the reason for our existence? Shouldn’t it already be obvious to us? But listen, now, to what the Lord says in Isaiah:

➤ Isaiah 43:20–21 [cf. LXX] — I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen race, the people whom I obtained for myself **that they might tell forth my praises**.

In Isaiah, **Israel** was to tell forth the praises of the one who delivered them from their slavery in Egypt and the one who would one day deliver them with far more mighty and wonderful acts from their exile in Babylon. So what does it mean when Peter says that **we** are those who **now** declare the praises of him who **has** called us out of darkness into his marvelous light? Can you see that **our** reason for being is the very reason that Israel existed from the beginning? Now that **we** have experienced the mighty acts of God in delivering us from Babylon and even from all the powers of death and hell itself our whole point in living, our whole reason for being, our ultimate purpose in every breath we take is to not be silent, but rather to faithfully declare the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. I love what one person says about this vivid picture of being called out of darkness into his marvelous light: “The phrase itself expresses [our] wonder at being illumined by God and brought into his presence... [it] forms the emotional motive for [declaring the praises of God].” (Davids; cf. Gen. 1:1-5; 2 Cor. 4:3-6; Acts 26:16-18) That’s what we’ve been seeking to do throughout this entire sermon, and that’s ultimately what all sermons are to be. That’s what we should see our “one-anothering” as the opportunity to do. That’s what we’ve been doing and what we’re about to do again in our singing, and also in our celebration of the Lord’s Supper each and every week.

Peter uses the same rare word that we have in Isaiah (LXX) for God’s “praises,” (*arete*; 5x’s in LXX; 3 x’s in NT) so we know he’s quoting Isaiah. And yet he uses a **different** word than the

one we find in Isaiah to describe our “declaring” of these praises (*exangelo* versus *diegeomai*). This is the only time this word is ever used in the entire New Testament. So why does Peter use it here when he could just as easily have quoted the language from Isaiah? In the Old Testament (LXX) we find the word Peter uses only eight times, with all but one of these being in the Psalms. So what does that tell you? This seems to be a word that Peter knew from his own meditation and study in the Psalms and so he uses it here in light of its **meaning there, in** the Psalms.

- Psalm 9:13–14 — Be gracious to me, O LORD! See my affliction from those who hate me, O you who lift me up from the gates of death, that I may **recount** all your praises, that in the gates of the daughter of Zion I may rejoice in your salvation.
- Psalm 107:17–22 [LXX: 106:17-22] — Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and **tell** of his deeds in songs of joy!

What we see in these verses is the declaring and proclaiming of God’s praises in the context of worship and especially in the gathering together of God’s people for worship.* (cf. Michaels) We exist together as a chosen **race**, a royal **priesthood**, a holy **nation**, and a **people** for God’s own possession **for** “**THIS**” (the church gathered in worship) and so also as we go from here to continue declaring in word and in deed the praises of our God who has made us to be all that we are.

- Psalm 30:11–12 — You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever.
- Hebrews 13:15 — Through [Jesus] then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

* Psalm 71:12–16 [LXX: 70:12-16] — O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me! ... I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. My mouth will **tell** of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge. With the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone.

Psalm 73:27–28 [LXX: 72:27-28] — Those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may **tell of** all your works.

Psalm 79:11–13 [LXX: 78:11-13] — Let the groans of the prisoners come before you; according to your great power, preserve those doomed to die! Return sevenfold into the lap of our neighbors the taunts with which they have taunted you, O Lord! But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will **recount** your praise.

Psalm 119:12–13 [LXX: 118:12-13] — Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! With my lips I **declare** all the rules of your mouth.

Cf. Sirach 18:2–5 — the Lord alone is just. To none has he given power to proclaim his works; and who can search out his mighty deeds? Who can measure his majestic power? And who can fully **recount** his mercies?

Cf. Sirach 39:10 — Nations will speak of [the righteous man’s] wisdom, and the congregation will **proclaim** his praise.

And so now we come to the climax of the climax; the grand finale in the grand finale. Now that we know who we are, Peter would have us remember that it was not always this way.

VII. 1 Peter 2:10 — Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

We’ve been in the Psalms, we’ve been in Isaiah, we’ve been in Exodus, and now Peter takes us to Hosea.

- Hosea 1:2–3, 6–9 — When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD.” So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and... she conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, “Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all... When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. And the LORD said, “Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.”

Remember what the Lord said so long before in Exodus 19:

- Exodus 19:5–6 [cf. LXX] — **If** you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special people among all peoples... and you shall be to me a royal priesthood and a holy nation.

But Israel didn’t obey God’s voice and they didn’t keep God’s covenant; so now God says through Hosea that He will show them no mercy, and they’ll no longer be His people. But no sooner has He spoken these words than they’re followed immediately by these wonderful words of hope:

- Hosea 1:10–11; 2:23 — **Yet** the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Children of the living God.” And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land... I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, “You are my people”; and he shall say, “You are my God.”

One day God would gather the people from exile—from all the far-flung corners of the empire—and reclaim them as **His** people – a people who would never cease to declare His praises and say always with joy: “**You are my God.**” So we have to ask, now, for the last time: What does it mean when Peter quotes Hosea and says to all of **US** as “sojourners” and “foreigners” of the dispersion: “Once you were not a people, **but now YOU are** God’s people; once you had not received mercy, **but now YOU have** received mercy”? It means that the promised time of Israel’s regathering is **here**, and it means that in this regathering, we have all, now, been **included**. It means that in our coming to Jesus and believing in Him and confessing with joy, “You are my God,” the prophecy of Hosea is being fulfilled, now, in us.

“You ARE a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Conclusion

It’s only when we’ve really, truly grasped this identity that is ours that we’ll be ready to live faithfully **in relationship to the world**, which is the theme Peter’s turning to in the very next section. In other words, it’s only as we are **continually grasping** this awesome **identity** that’s been given to us that we’ll truly be ready for these words in verses 11-12:

- 1 Peter 2:11–12 — Beloved, I urge you **as sojourners and exiles** to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Now that **we** have experienced the mighty acts of God in gathering us out of Babylon and delivering us even from all the powers of death and hell itself our whole point in living—our whole reason for being, our ultimate purpose in every breath we take is to **not be silent**, but rather to **faithfully declare** and **proclaim** the praises of him who has called **us** out of darkness into his marvelous light. Will we be faithful to do that this morning, and every week, and every day of our lives?