



Outer Growth - Israelites

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.

2 Corinthians 11:22

Identity - 2 Corinthians 5:17

Serve - Joshua 24:14, John 12:26

Remnant - Isaiah 10:21

Abandon - Joshua 1:9

Eyes - 1 John 2:16

Lifestyle - Jude 1:7

Idols - 2 Corinthians 6:16

Trouble - Isaiah 26:16, Nahum 1:7

Ears - Matthew 13:9

Sin - John 8:34

Who are the Israelites? Descended from Israel, honored by having such an ancestor, and by bearing a name so distinguished as that of his descendants. It was formerly the honorable title of the people of God, and to whom it belongs. It was their elevated external privilege of the nation into the family of God, or to be regarded as His special people, as in Deuteronomy seven, verse six. "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."

The Israelites in the Bible start in Exodus, who were the descendants of Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. They are God's chosen people in the Old Testament, known for having received the law from Moses at Mount Sinai and for conquering and settling in the land of Canaan. After four hundred years of Israelite slavery in Egypt, God raised Moses to demand the King

of Egypt to let God's people go free. Pharaoh's repeated refusals led God to send ten plagues on Egypt, climaxing with the death of every firstborn son. Finally, Pharaoh relented and released over two million Israelite slaves.

The theme verse for this subject is about the apostle Paul's suffering. However, we are all born into this world, starting somewhere. All of us were born in sin, and were sinners. Still, there are three ways that people live today: ungodly, godly, and those who serve and have a personal relationship with God. The theme verse Paul was responding in Second Corinthians eleven, verse twenty-two, "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I." Paul, who was now an apostle and servant of God, was a different person before his conversion to Jesus Christ.

Before his name was Paul the apostle, he was known as Saul, the persecutor, who was there when they stoned Stephen. Saint Stephen was a deacon in the early church at Jerusalem, as in Acts eight, verse one, "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time, there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem." So Saul was not a saint, but was responsible for persecuting the saints of God. In Acts nine, verses one and four, "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest," and also confronted, "And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

Today, people can relate to this theme. All of us who are born into the world are serving something. Some of us come to know God and even accept salvation. However, those who accept and serve Him will also do His will. The Israelites were the chosen people of God. And those who are faithful in following Him through His servant Moses belong to the Lord totally, in which God's Spirit (the Holy Spirit) rules. Similarly, the believer becomes a new person, renewed after the image of God, with a renewed knowledge, understanding, and living a life of holiness.

The Israelites in the Old Testament had an identity with God. However, during their experience in Egypt against Pharaoh, most of

them failed to maintain their identity with God and to identify with the Egyptian lifestyle. After the departure of Egypt and Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, God led them out as in Exodus thirteen, verse eighteen, "But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt." Despite this great deliverance from the Almighty God from the bondage of the Egyptians, the Israelites succumbed to the pressure of the pursuit when Pharaoh and the people of Egypt changed their minds. The complaint against the servant Moses was heard by them.

The Israelites' response in Exodus fourteen, verses eleven through twelve, "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness."

Like the people of God in the Old Testament, it is easy today to forget the miracles, blessings, and answers to prayers, to eventually complain about a situation that now seems overwhelming. Who do you think is doing this? The evil one, the devil himself. Why would Pharaoh change his mind suddenly to pursue these same Israelites after the experiences of these ten plagues? Especially after the last plague concerning the death of all firstborn for the Egyptian side?

Followers of Christ have to be aware of this behavior. If we identify with Christ, why should we behave and copy the ways of the world? Believers should not worry about trying to "fit in" to be accepted because if our identity is with God, we cannot compromise to be approved by those who do not believe or serve God; it will not work. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you," as in First John three, verse thirteen. Unfortunately, the people of the world will only use followers of Christ for their favour, as did Pharaoh with God's chosen people.

The Israelites must serve God and not look at what He can do for them. At the beginning of Joshua twenty-four, the leader and servant called them for a covenant renewal in which they committed themselves to serve the Lord in faithfulness and loyal devotion. Joshua drew attention to God's past goodness to and care for Israel, as listed in verses two through thirteen. Genuine leaders of God's leaders must share Joshua's concern for God's honor, serve Him only, and remain separated from the world. As with Joshua and the Israelites, serving the Lord is not merely a one-time choice.

Inherent in the salvation provided by God is an issue of personal choice. Each believer must continually choose whom they will serve. We must choose time after time to believe, trust, and persevere in the faith, and to obey God and His Word. The renewal of right choices by the believer involves the fear of the Lord, loyalty to the truth, obedience from a sincere heart, and the renunciation of sin with its associated pleasures. Failure to choose to serve and love the Lord will eventually result in judgment and destruction.

There were an estimated two million people who left Egypt on their journey to the promised land. However, on that quest to that destination, it went from an estimated forty days to reach the promised land to forty years due to the rebellion from them. Still, there will be some of the Israelites along with the mixed multitude, as in the beginning of Numbers eleven, verse four, "And the mixt multitude that was among them," they will possess along with the servants such as Caleb, as in Numbers fourteen, verse twenty-four. "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it."

Today, some people who have received salvation and declare to serve the Lord, do know about Him but do not personally know Him themselves. Serving the Lord begins from the heart, the whole heart fully, as mentioned again in Numbers fourteen, verse twenty-four, "and hath followed me fully." Followers of Jesus Christ must be either all in or not. A believer cannot have one foot in the world and

the other in the Lord. "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth," as in Revelation three, verse sixteen.

The Israelites in the Old Testament were with Moses and his servants. However, some of their hearts were not in the right place with God. Remember the first complaint by some after the pursuit of the Egyptians who came to take them back through the Red Sea. "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." Like the Israelites back then, some followers abandon the Word of God and express their feelings concerning the issue at hand instead of speaking words of faith to uplift them. In Romans nine, verse six, "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." Although many profess to be believers, their reaction in expressing unbelief in the moment became obvious. To abandon God's Word when needed most could have changed the circumstance if they believed.

The eyes of some Israelites made them quick to confess openly about a potential problem rather than believing God and His Word to carry them. They saw the Egyptians coming, "And they said to Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" They were quick to evaluate the situation instead of trusting God to help them in it. On the other hand, Moses was with them, and this is his response to them in verses thirteen to fourteen of Exodus fourteen, "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

The eyes are quick to get the mouth into trouble. We see, react, and say before we

come to know. Like a painting on the wall, the eyes will guess what they see in the picture, and not be accurate. It is easy for followers to conclude something and not be even close to where their imagination was taking them. The Israelites later found out through Moses that God sent a pillar of fire to stop the progress of the Egyptians reaching them.

The Israelites, in the Old Testament, were accustomed to the ways of the Egyptians, which influenced their way of living. Instead of following the ways of the Lord, they adapted to the lifestyle in Egypt. Remember the last part of Exodus fourteen, verse twelve, "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." They were so familiar with the ways of Egypt that their reaction was no different in how they lived under Pharaoh. Today, there are followers of God who, although they accepted salvation through the Son of God, still live under the culture they adapted to from the beginning. The people of God, after leaving Egypt, on their journey to the promised land, walking for three days in the wilderness, found no water. In Exodus fifteen, verse twenty-four, "And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" For all that God had done for them, they were quick to lose faith in His goodness, His wisdom, and His will for their lives. It is so easy for some followers of God, especially new converts, that when something does not go right, they easily desire to return to certain ways instead of holding on to the Lord and allowing Him to move on their behalf.

Despite all the outward privileges, profession, and apparent conversion, the Israelites could not secure themselves from the vengeance of God, who turned aside in unbelief and disobedience by having Aaron, Moses' older brother, make them a golden calf, which is an idol, as in Exodus thirty-two, verses one through four. This golden calf was not found when the Israelites left Egypt for freedom, nor when they needed help against the pursuing Egyptians at the Red Sea, nor there when there was no water to drink in Marah. The idol

was not around in the wilderness of Sin when the Israelites needed bread to eat, nor in Rephidim when there was no water to drink. Remember, the Israelites were a mixed multitude, and suddenly, an idol formed to represent them? What was made did absolutely nothing for the people of God. The only one who provided and delivered the Israelites in times of need was God Himself. Today, many people who are born and grow into maturity choose to serve their own gods, which is their choice. However, did they create them? Only the living God is the Creator of all people, as in the beginning of Genesis one, verse twenty-six, "And God said, Let us make man in our image." The Israelites were there when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, holding the Ten Commandments, and saw the second one, as in Exodus twenty, verse four, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

There were times when God chastened the Israelites, and the leaders called to Him in prayer. Moses was the servant of God assigned to lead the people to the destination that the Lord had in store for them. Every creature, every business, anyway serviceable to our comfort, God makes to be so. He makes that work for us, which seemed to go against us. The Israelites had been slaves of sin and Satan, but by the Divine grace, they were taught to look to be set free from all former masters.

The cause opposed to God and His kingdom will sink at last. See our need in afflictions. Before, prayer came drop by drop; now they pour it out, it comes now like water from a fountain. Afflictions bring us to secret prayer. Consider Christ as the Speaker addressing his church. His resurrection from the dead was an earnest of all the deliverance foretold.

The power of His grace, like the dew or rain, which causes the herbs that seem dead to revive, would raise his church from the lowest state. But we may refer to the resurrection of the dead, especially of those united to Christ. However, although God is awesome in His power, yet He is merciful, gracious, and beneficent in His nature, and is a sure refuge

and protection to those who worship and serve Him sincerely, and put their trust in Him; and He knows and pays a particular regard to all such, so that they are never overlooked or neglected by Him; He approves, owns, and preserves them.

"Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." It is so easy to hear but not easy to follow. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," as in the latter part of Matthew twenty-six, verse forty-one. Thereby, the things of God were made more plain and easy to those willing to be taught, and at the same time more difficult and obscure to those who were willingly ignorant. The Israelites face the same challenges as people today who desire to follow God and serve: The actions speak louder than the words we receive through God's servants.

The sower is our Lord Jesus Christ, by himself, or by His servants. Preaching to a multitude is sowing the corn. However, if we become like careless, trifling hearers, then they are like easy prey to Satan. The evil one is the great murderer of souls, so he is the great thief of sermons, and will be sure to rob us of the word, if we take not care to keep it. Hypocrites, like the stony ground, often get the start of true Christians in the shows of profession. Many are glad to hear a good message, but do not profit by it. They are told of free salvation, of the believer's privileges, and the happiness of heaven; and, without any change of heart, without any abiding conviction of their own depravity, their need of a Saviour, or the excellence of holiness, they soon profess an unwarranted assurance. But when some heavy trial threatens them, or some sinful advantage may be had, they give up or disguise their profession, or turn to some easier system.

Worldly cares are fitly compared to thorns, for they came in with sin, and are a fruit of the curse; they are good in their place to stop a gap, but a man must be well armed that has much to do with them; they are entangling, vexing, scratching, and their end is to be burned, as in Hebrews six, verse eight.

Worldly cares are enormous hindrances to our profiting by the word of God. The deceitfulness of riches does the mischief; they cannot be

said to deceive us unless we put our trust in them, then they choke the good seed. What distinguished the good ground was fruitfulness. By this, true Christians are distinguished from hypocrites. Christ does not say that this good ground has no stones in it, or no thorns, but none that could hinder its fruitfulness. All are not alike; we should aim at the highest, to bring forth more fruit. The sense of hearing cannot be better employed than in hearing God's word; and let us look to ourselves that we may know what sort of hearers we are.

"For the wages of sin is death;" as in the beginning of Romans six, verse twenty-three. The Israelites in the Old Testament experienced what God's mighty power did to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. They also come to know how much God is a provider during their journey to the promised land in the wilderness. However, with all that God has done for His chosen people, including the severe warning of His mighty power with Moses and the Ten Commandments that were given, the Israelites still find themselves compromising and falling into sin with the golden calf and rebelling against the Lord. The Israelites continued to complain about their condition and remembered Egypt in Numbers eleven, verse five, "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick."

Sin may seem good for the flesh, but in the end, harmful to the soul. The spirit is what connects to God and the Holy Spirit. The battle is in the mind, in which the devil uses to cause many to sin from their heart to disconnect from God. This is life, which seems, from this narrative, a game, but it is not. Unbelievers enjoy sin because they claim it is sweet, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind. However, too much of anything, eventually is no good. James one, verses fourteen to fifteen, declares, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

The Israelites back then, did say after doing wrong many times before God and His

servants, that they shall serve Him. However, going back to their ways they come to know. "And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people," as in Exodus thirty-two, verse nine. A stiff-neck is a person physically unable to move their neck and stay in one position. There are other terms such as hard-nosed or hard-headed which is basically someone set in their own ways. This is how God saw the Israelites at that time in the Old Testament.

The Israelites, back then in the Old Testament, are similar to some of the people of God today. They wrestle with the flesh that prevents them from drawing closer to the Lord with their spirit, which is due to the fleshly desires that the devil tempts them with repeatedly. The enemy comes to know our weaknesses by what he sees and the confessions we make with our mouths. Therefore, like the Israelites back then, we must repent and ask the Lord for strength that we do not look back and go forward with Him. Otherwise, we will be labeled as "stiff-necked" people. And we know what happened to some of the Israelites back then. Let's say, many lost their way, not making it to the promised land. We, as saints of God, do not want that to be our end because the end is near for the Lord to come, sooner than we may think.