

Identity & the New Israel

We all have an identity problem. Some of us have way too much security in our identities and others of us don't have enough security in our identities. The story of the Bible can be understood as the story of 2 major identities: the identity of Adam and the identity of Israel. Adam was not secure enough with his identity and he wanted to upgrade. Israel was way too secure in their identity and assumed it entitled them. The Gospel is that Jesus Christ solves and fixes the identity problem with Adam and Israel.

Israel Identity: Offspring of Abraham, Son of God, Kingdom of Priests, Wife of God

new, corporate Adam. offspring of Abraham. formed into 12 tribes. Pharaoh sought to kill male children. firstborn son of God. redeemed from slavery in Exodus. God led them through Red Sea. saw God's glory at Mt. Sinai. kingdom of priests to the world. failed to keep the Law of Moses. could not imitate God's holiness. given priesthood to offer sacrifices. tested in the wilderness 40 years. fed by God with Manna from heaven. David was King that Unified Israel. made Jerusalem as center of life. built Temple where God dwelt. rebellious, prostituting wife of God. exiled and judged for rebellion. promised forgiveness in New Covenant. promised Son of Man to rule all.

Israel failed to resemble God and do what he does, and thus proved that they cannot not truly compare to Him. The only way for Israel to truly resemble God, was for God to incarnate them as Jesus of Nazareth: the True Israel.

I. Jesus Identifies as True Israel in His Life

Jesus was clearly a descendant of Abraham:

Matthew 1:1 *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the **son of Abraham.***

Jesus is the eternal God who has come in the flesh as the offspring of Abraham:

John 8:56-58 *Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." 57 So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **before Abraham was, I AM.**"*

Galatians 3:16 *Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," **who is Christ.***

There is no one verse that says "Jesus is the New Israel" like "Jesus is the New Adam". But, it is very clear by description that this is the case. First, by way of analogy, Israel is understood as God's Son and as I have stated, Israel is a corporate Adam. This is drawn out by Matthew's quotation of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:

Matthew 2:12-15 *And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. 13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." 14 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."*

Hosea 11:1-3 *When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. 2 The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. 3 Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them.*

The way to really do justice to the original context of Hosea is to understand Jesus as the True Son of God and, thus, true Israel. (Notice the Herod and Pharaoh similarity.)

This is also demonstrated by the correspondences between Jesus and Israel. Jesus chose 12 disciples, as there were 12 tribes of Israel. Jesus came out of Egypt as did Israel. Jesus wandered in the wilderness for 40 days, as to 40 years for Israel.

Just as God's glory was revealed on Mount Sinai, the glory of Jesus was revealed at the Mount of Transfiguration:

Luke 9:28-35 *Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the **mountain** to pray. 29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. 30 And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake **they saw his glory** and the two men who stood with him. 33 And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"--not knowing what he said. 34 As he was saying these things, **a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid** as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "**This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!**"*

God gave Israel the Law of Moses (including the 10 Commandments) which Israel broke throughout her history. But Jesus came to fulfill the Law and Prophets:

Matthew 5:17 *Do not think that I have come to abolish the **Law or the Prophets**; I have not come to abolish them but **to fulfill them**.*

Israel was called to imitate God's holiness but couldn't. Jesus put God's holiness on display as the true High Priest:

Hebrews 4:14-15 *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a **high priest** who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet **without sin**.*

God fed Israel in the wilderness for 40 years by given them manna. Jesus miraculously fed thousands of people and therefore proclaimed that He was the Manna of God, the Bread of Life:

John 6:27-35 *Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." 28 Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." 30 So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but **my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.**" 34 They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." 35 Jesus said to them, "**I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.***

Title "Son of Man" used over 200 times in gospels, mostly by Jesus – from Daniel 7.

John 3:13 *No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the **Son of Man**.*

II. Jesus' Death and Resurrection Re-Identifies Those in True Israel

The language of "firstborn" is the language of Israel, the firstborn son of God. As the true "firstborn" and "heir of the world", Jesus was the firstborn from the dead:

Colossians 1:15-20 *He is the image of the invisible God, **the firstborn of all creation.** 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, **the firstborn from the dead**, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*

Through his death and resurrection, he could become the firstborn among brothers:

Romans 8:29 *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the **firstborn** among many brothers.*

Both John the Baptist and Jesus addressed the question, "Who is True Israel?" or "Who are the true offspring of Abraham?" Both of them made the strong point that just because someone may be a descendent of Abraham, it doesn't mean they are the offspring of Abraham.

Matthew 3:9 *And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.*

John 8:39-44 *They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, 40 but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. 41 **You are doing the works your father did.**" They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father--even God." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. 43 Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. 44 **You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.***

Those in Christ are now true Israel. Paul highlights that being a Jew or being part of Israel is a matter of the heart, not a matter of ethnicity.

Romans 2:28-29 *For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 **But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.***

Romans 9:6-8 *But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, 7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but **the children of the promise are counted as offspring.***

Galatians 3:7-9 *Know then **that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.** 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." 9 So then, **those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.***

Israel was redeemed or purchased out of slavery in Egypt through the Exodus. Jesus redeems us from slavery to sin and Satan through His death and resurrection:

Galatians 3:13-14 *Christ **redeemed** us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"-- 14 so that*

in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Romans 6:6-7 *We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would **no longer be enslaved to sin**. 7 For one who has died has been **set free from sin**.*

Through the redeeming work of Christ, we as believers are a kingdom and priests:

Revelation 1:4-6 *Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the **firstborn** of the dead, and the **ruler** of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6 and **made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father**, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.*

III. Our Identity in the True Israel

Since those in Jesus are true Israel, they look at the experience of Israel in the Old Testament as warning against sin and as a pattern for the kingdom in Jesus.

1 Corinthians 10:1-11 *For I want you to know, brothers, that **our fathers** were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and **all ate the same spiritual food**, 4 and **all drank the same spiritual drink**. For **they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ**. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” 8 We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. 9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, 10 nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*

Hebrews 12:18-24 *For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest 19 and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. 20 For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” 21 Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” 22 But **you have come to Mount Zion** and to the city of the living God, **the heavenly Jerusalem**, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of **the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven**, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, **the mediator of a new covenant**, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

Revelation 20:9-14 *Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you **the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.**" 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me **the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,** 11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates **the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed**— 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

As the New Israel, he has come to expand Israel as God's people, not replace them with Gentiles. As the New Adam and True Israel, he fuses people from every tribe, language, and nation to be God's people.

Israel	Jesus
new, corporate Adam	last and true Adam
offspring of Abraham	the offspring of Abraham
formed into 12 tribes	formed group of 12 disciples
Pharaoh sought to kill male children	Herod seeks to kill this male child
firstborn son of God	the firstborn Son of God
redeemed from slavery in Exodus	redeems people from slavery to sin/Satan in New Exodus
God led them through Red Sea	led Peter to walk on water
saw God's glory at Mt. Sinai	reveals His glory at Transfiguration
kingdom of priests to the world	the King and Priest of the world
failed to keep the Law of Moses	fulfills the Law of Moses in every way
could not imitate God's holiness	perfectly displays God's holiness
given priesthood to offer sacrifices	Jesus is High Priest who offered himself
tested in the wilderness 40 years	tested in wilderness 40 days
fed by God with Manna from heaven	fed thousands and is the Manna from heaven
David was King that Unified Israel	New David who unifies the world
made Jerusalem as center of life	is center of life in New Jerusalem
built Temple where God dwelt	true Temple who sends Spirit to dwell in us as a Temple in Him
rebellious, prostituting wife of God	dies for His wife the Church
exiled and judged for rebellion	finally exiled and judged for rebellion of his people
promised forgiveness in New Covenant	purchased forgiveness as New Covenant
promised Son of Man to rule all	Son of Man who now rules all