

**CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

**TOPIC:
“LET MY PEOPLE GO”: EXAMINING THE CONCEPT OF THE PEOPLE OF
GOD FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE BASED ON EXODUS 8:1
AND ITS COMPARISON WITH THE CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH IN THE
NEW TESTAMENT**

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**DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY
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BY

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
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MANAGEMENT**

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY

JULY, 2017

DECLARATION

I, Samuel Akwasi Owusu, do hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original research, except for sections for which references have been duly made, and to the best of my knowledge, no part of it has been presented to this University College or any other institution for the award of a degree.

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DEDICATION

This work is humbly dedicated to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Also, to my lovely best friend Sandra Adjei, my parents Mr. and Mrs. Owusu, my siblings, the extended family, and friends. Moreover, to all students and ministers of Christ Jesus.

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Special thanks goes to my beloved best friend Sandra Adjei for her diverse support and contributions in my life.

From the bottom of my heart, I am thankful for all your cardinal contributions and supports both spiritual and physical to enable me complete this course successfully and also come out with this work.

From the bottom of my heart may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete, blameless, and curtail the influx of evil in this world until the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Kavod Adonai...” I love you all!

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The concept “the people of God” came into being as God’s own initiative, as indicated in Exodus 6:7¹, which always designates a clear relationship. However, this relationship does not come through good deeds but rather it is a deliberate choice to follow God alone.

Moreover, the phrase, “the people of God”, is also seen in many places in the New Testament. For instance, 2 Corinthians 6:16 mentions the same promises which states “...I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (RSV) which is a parallel to Exodus 6² (cf. Heb. 4:9; 11:25, Rev. 21:3).

Robert L. Reymond had maintained that, the Old Testament quite obviously provides the background to the New Testament’s representation of the church as God’s *ἐκκλησία*, *ekklēsia*.³ The mission of God is that He wants everybody to receive mercy and this is known as “*Missio Dei*”. The salvific plan of God is for everyone and not for a particular group of people and thus became the ministry of God, the Father, which is the ministry of revelation and reconciliation. After the fall of Adam, God made the promise, i.e.

¹ Exodus 6:7, and I will take you for 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. (Revised Standard Version, RSV, 1946, 1952, and 1971, USA).

² This is a declaration that, with the exception of places indicated, all Biblical references are entirely from the New English Translation (NET).

³ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 810.

*protoevangelium*⁴. In Genesis 3:15 that the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent's seed which shall also bruise his heel. In order to fulfill that promise, God took the initiative by revealing Himself to Abraham (Gen. 12:1ff), which takes its beginning from Seth and down to Noah. God then gave this promise to Abraham, 'I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing' (Gen. 12:2, NKJV). This nation would become the nation of Israel, the first group to be designated as God's people.⁵ God then chose the tribe of Judah and later narrowed it down to David and his descendants. God chose David to hold the "scepter," a symbol of kingship that would always remain in the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Psalm 89:34-37).⁶

Most importantly, this promise was culminated in Jesus Christ who came through this line so "all the families of the earth shall be blessed"⁷ (Matthew 1:3, 16, c.f., Heb. 7:14). The historic Jesus did not come to introduce His own ministry. His ministry was fundamentally to do the will of His Father who sent Him. And later came the ministry of the Holy Spirit who gave birth to the Church, i.e. *ecclesiogenesis*⁸, as Jesus made that promise before He ascended into Heaven.

The Old Testament seems to portray that God's love for Israel was particular (focused on them) and exclusive (for them alone), but the intention of God was to elect Israel to serve (as priests) the other nations. In other words, they were to be a witness of God to the whole world. God intentionally chose Israel and made them His people by a covenant of

⁴Protoevangelium meant the first gospel in Genesis 3:15.

⁵<http://www.gotquestions.org/people-of-God.html> (date accessed February 8, 2016).

⁶<http://lifehopeandtruth.com/prophecy/12-tribes-of-israel/tribe-of-judah/> (date accessed February 8, 2016).

⁷Genesis 12:3, NKJV.

⁸Ecclesiogenesis is a theological terminology which means the beginnings of the Church.

grace (Deut. 5:6) and also gave them the Law which was His (God) requirements for life for them (Deut. 5:7-21) and thus the Sinai declaration. More so, they were to separate themselves from the other nations (Deut. 7:1-6). They were to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength and also not to forget all that Yahweh has commanded them to do (Deut. 6:4-9).

God's plan to work through a specific group is what is revealed in His choice of Abraham, through whom His mission is to be accomplished. Abraham was therefore chosen by grace and he was to be a blessing to all nations. In this wise Israel became a people with a mission. Exclusivity⁹ is not equal to exclusivism¹⁰.

The historic Jesus understood His mission in terms of the Old Testament tradition. Matthew, the Gospel writer, introduced Jesus as the one who has come to fulfill what had been promised to the fathers and mothers of the faith. The teachings of Paul concerning the Church, i.e. the body of Christ, were epitomized in his epistles. For instance, Paul told the believers in Corinth that they were all of one body and not in diversity since they were all baptized by one Spirit and also it was the same one Spirit that they were made to drink and as a result there is neither Jews or Greeks, slaves nor free persons in Christ (2 Cor. 12:13). Moreover, Paul made this trustworthy statement when he was addressing the Galatians, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26, Lexham English Bible).

Against this background the researcher seeks to examine the concept of the people of

⁹Exclusivity is the state of being the only person, group of people, or organization that is allowed to have or do something. <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/exclusivity> (date accessed February, 1, 2016).

¹⁰Exclusivism is the action or policy of excluding a person or group from a place, group, or privilege. <http://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/exclusivism> (date accessed February, 1, 2016).

God from the Old Testament perspective and its comparison with the concept of the “Church” in the New Testament.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Church of Jesus Christ is viewed by Christians as consisting of the people who have been called out of sin into salvation. Thus, in the view of Wayne Grudem, the Church is a community of all true believers for all time.¹¹ From this view, the Church is to be made up of all those who are truly saved, which must include both believers in the New Testament age and believers in the Old Testament age. Jesus Christ Himself builds the Church by calling His people to Himself who promised “I [Jesus Christ] will build my Church” (Matthew 16:18).

It can be deduced from the reference that the process whereby Christ builds the Church seems to be a continuation of the pattern established by God, the Father, in the Old Testament whereby He called people to Himself to be worshipping assembly before Him.

There are several indications in the Old Testament whereby God, the Father, considered His people as a “Church”, a people gathered for the purpose of worshipping God. The Septuagint translates the word for “gather” (Heb. **לָקַח**) in Deut. 4:10 with the Greek term **ἐκκλησίαω**, “to summon an assembly,” the verb that is related to the New Testament noun **ἐκκλησία**, “Church.”¹²

¹¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Nottingham: Inter Varsity Press, 1994), 853.

¹²Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 854.

In line with this, the study tries to find out, biblically whether that phrase ‘people of God’ only refer to Israel or is an inclusive phrase for the Church in the New Testament. This is a serious problem that many Biblical scholars and writers seem not to have set their attention on to investigate. Therefore, the researcher took this as an issue of concern and investigated the effect it has on both the Church and her members.

1.3 Research Questions

The main question this study addressed is, “What is the nexus between the people of God in the Old Testament and the concept of the church in the New Testament”?

Moreover, the study critically looked at the following specific questions which include: who are the people of God in the context of Exodus 8:1?; what is the nature of the “Church” in the Old Testament?; what is the nature of the Church in the New Testament?; and does the Church in the New Testament differ from the “people of God” in the Old Testament?

1.4 Aim & Objectives of the Study

The main aim and objective of this study is: to examine “the nexus between the people of God in the Old Testament and the concept of the church in the New Testament”.

Furthermore, the other specific objectives of the study are: to find out who are the people of God in the context of Exodus 8:1; to survey the nature of the “Church” in the Old Testament as the people of God; to examine the nature of the Church in the New

Testament as the people of God; and to investigate if there exist any difference between the New Testament Church and “people of God” in the Old Testament as argued by some Biblical Scholars and writers.

1.5 Scope and Focus of the Study

There are several indications of the phrase “people of God” in both the Old and the New Testaments. However, the study will only examine the concept from the context of Exodus 8:1 and relate it to the Church in the New Testament.

1.6 Research Methodology

The researcher conducted an exegetical study of the text on hand using both the Critical Text Immanent Approach and the Historical Critical Approach. Moreover, an enquiry into the original Hebrew text was made to ascertain the original meaning of the text.

1.6.1 Methods of data collection

This study cannot be commenced in a vacuity. Therefore, the researcher collected data from only the secondary sources.

1.6.1.1 Secondary sources

Secondary data is the data that have been already collected by and readily available from other sources. One of the advantages of this method of data collection is, it will help to improve the understanding of the concept of the people of God in the Old Testament and the concept of the Church in the New Testament. More so, it will provide a basis for the comparison of the data that will be collected by the researcher.¹³ Looking at the focus and scope of the study, the researcher consulted different secondary sources encompassing relevant Bible commentaries, books, magazines, journals, newspapers, and also from electronic sources such as the internet et cetera. These are published materials of scholarly opinion. Other unpublished works which are also relevant to the work were consulted.

1.6.2 Data Analysis

Data Analysis is the process of systematically applying statistical and/or logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data.¹⁴ Qualitative analysis was used to evaluate the data gathered. This method relies on the quality of the information based on its relevance to the subjects being studied rather than on the quantity of responses to a particular issue.¹⁵

¹³http://www.managementstudyguide.com/secondary_data.htm (date accessed February 20, 2016).

¹⁴http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/n_illinois_u/datamanagement/datopic.html (date accessed February 20, 2016).

¹⁵Barbara M. Wildemuth, 'Understanding and Evaluating Qualitative Research', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63 (1995), 881.

1.7 Literature Review

In carrying out any research, or study, it is vital to examine the views and opinions of some scholars who have carried out similar studies. This is significant in order to give a sense of direction to the study at hand. Against this backdrop, the writer reviews the following books as against the respective topics.

1.7.1 The Biblical Understanding of the People of God

According to John Calvin, to be accounted the people of God means the same as to be by a special privilege received into his [His] favour, and to be called by adoption to hope of eternal salvation.¹⁶ The people of God, in the view of the author, are those who are received into God's favour and more so called by adoption to the hope of eternal salvation.

In the words of Wright, the people of God are a people only by this act of God's election.¹⁷ In the view of the author, the people of God are called into being by God's act of sovereign election. Here, God's word makes a point of the fact that God has chosen a people for His own possession and purposes.

In 2 Peter 1:10-11, "Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never; so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (RSV) In Isaiah

¹⁶ Charles William Bingham, *Calvin's Commentaries Volume II* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 130.

¹⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The People of God and the State in the Old Testament*, "Themelios" 16.1 (Oct/Nov 1990): 4-10.

43:1, “But now thus says the LORD, he [He]who created you, O Jacob, he [He] who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

From the above texts, one can see that, the biblical understanding of the “people of God” is those who have being called by God, Himself.

1.7.2 The Theological Understanding of the People of God in the Old Testament

Prekopp observes that,

‘The Bible often refers to the “God of Israel”. Is he [He] the God of a country – a territory? Can a territory worship God? In the Old Testament, there are many references to “My people Israel”, and the term “Israel” is used to signify the people of God and not a land or territory.’¹⁸

The term “Israel” never refers to a country but rather God’s people. This is so because it was God Himself who gave the name to Jacob due to the fact that in him (Jacob) He (God) would raise a people for Himself (cf. Gen. 34:10-12).

Wright argues, for Israel was not just the people of God (many nations would claim that in one form or another), but specifically the people of Yahweh, and that in itself meant a covenant commitment to a certain kind of society that reflected Yahweh’s character, values, priorities and goals.¹⁹ God calls people to become His worshippers and not just to live as they will. Thus, He intentionally called Israel to be His priests to the entire world in that they might mirror His (God) character, values, etc., and through that He might save the world.

¹⁸ E. K. Prekopp, *The Israel of God* (England: Eden, 2005), 27-35.

¹⁹ Wright, “The People of God”, *Themelios* 16.1 (Oct/Nov 1990): 4-10.

God's perfect plan for creation included a nation which He chose to set apart as His "people." This chosen "people" was the nation Israel. The nation Israel became the people of God. They were a people with a very special calling. They were to be a "holy nation" and a "kingdom of priests."²⁰ The Israelites were called to be God's special people. That is, they were called to be God's ministers and so their calling was very special. The significance of the term "the people of God" cannot be underestimated.

1.7.3 The Theological Understanding of the People of God in the New Testament

Grudem says, later in chapter 12, the author of Hebrews says that when New Testament Christians worship we [they] come into the presence of the "assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven".²¹ The New Testament Christians comprise both Jews and Gentiles who had come to believe in Jesus Christ, and also the "assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven" refers to the Old Testament believers.

In the view of Packer, essentially, the church is not a human organization as such, but a divinely created fellowship of sinners who trust a common Saviour, and are one with each other because they are one with Him in a union realized by the Holy Spirit.²² He further argues the New Testament church is the historical continuation of the Old Testament Israel. The fundamental idea of biblical ecclesiology is of the church as the

²⁰ The People of God in God's Perfect Plan, <https://bible.org/seriespage/9-people-god-god-s-perfect-plan> pages 2-10 (date accessed February 20, 2016).

²¹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 854.

²² James I. Packer, 'The Nature of the Church', in Carl F. H. Henry, *Basic Christian Doctrines* (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 242.

covenant²³ people of God.²⁴ The author maintains that both the Old Testament believers and New Testament believers are in a union since the New Testament believers are in continuation of the Old Testament believers. Thus, the people of God comprise both, i.e. the Old and the New Testament believers.

Stanley maintains that, fundamentally the Church of Jesus Christ is neither a building nor an organization. Rather, it is a people, a special people, a people who see themselves as standing in relationship to the God who saves them and to each other as those who share in this salvation.²⁵ The Church refers to the people who have being called by God to be His people and not the physical edifice. The author further argues that, the New Testament believers viewed the Church as a people - a people brought together by the Holy Spirit – a people bound to each other through Christ – hence, a people standing in covenant with God.²⁶ Here, too, the author is emphatic that the New Testament believers are also a special people of God who also stand in covenant with Him (God).

1.8 Significance of the Study

There are many good things that can be learnt from this topic which will be very helpful for Christians today and posterity, the Church, seminaries and students. For instance, the concept of the people of God has a strong bearing on Christian's relationship to God. Ironically, there are those who think they are God's people who are not. In the Lord

²³ According to James I. Packer, Covenant is a defined relationship of promise and commitment which binds the parties concerned to perform whatever duties toward each other their relationship may involve.

²⁴ Packer, "The Nature of the Church," 242.

²⁵ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 464.

²⁶ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 465.

Jesus' earthly ministry, He informed the nation Israel that many who thought themselves to be the "**people of God**"²⁷ were mistaken (A tree and its fruit: Matt. 7:17-23).

Secondly, we live in a very individualistic age (i.e. the state of the world today). The focus of our society is inward-looking, not outward. The Bible's emphasis on a "**people of God**" necessitates that we think and act collectively about our faith and duty and not just individually.

More so, some Christians emphasize the differences between Israel and the church so much that the similarities between these two groups are overlooked. While there are differences between Israel and the church, both groups play a similar role as the "**people of God**." This work highlights the way in which the church currently carries on many of the functions of the nation Israel.

Furthermore, there is a great need for God's people to be reminded anew of the basis for the creation and preservation of the "**people of God**" and of the responsibilities which accompany this great privilege.

Finally, if Christians are to understand the plans and purposes of God, they must surely understand His purpose to create a "**people of God**" for His own possession. From the beginning of time until now, God has been calling out a people for Himself.

From the above illustrations, one can see that this work is very relevant both in academia and religious circles.

²⁷ This black bolding is my emphasis.

1.9 Organization of Chapters

The study which examines the concept of the people of God from the Old Testament perspective based on Exodus 8:1 and its comparison with the New Testament Church is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the general introduction for the study which captures the background of the study, the statement of problem, aim and objectives, scope and focus of the study, research methodology, literature review, and significance of study. Chapter two focuses on the context of the study by addressing issues such as background to the book of Exodus including its authorship and date, the purpose of writing; the Hebrew text, translation of the text; as well as the exegesis of the text. The third chapter is a critical word study of the phrase “the people of God” which includes; who were they? Why and when were they called the people of God? What is the nature of the Church in the Old Testament? What is the nature of the Church in the New Testament? And the Metaphors or images used to describe the People of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Chapter four is an analysis of findings and the implications of findings. Chapter five is the final work and therefore captures the summary of the study, conclusion, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

EXEGESIS ON EXODUS 8:1

2.0 Introduction

The discussion in the previous chapter focused on the general introduction of the work, and captured issues such as the background of the study, statement of problem, research questions, aims and objectives, scope and focus of the study, research methodology, literature review, the significance of study, and organization of the study.

In this chapter, the study focuses on the context of the study. It will address issues such as the background to the book of Exodus including its authorship and date, the purpose of writing, and the historical context. Moreover, it examines the Hebrew text, and offers a translation of the text, as well as an exegesis of the text.

2.1 Background to the Book of Exodus

Exodus is the second of the five books of the Pentateuch [the five Books of Moses].²⁸ The book (Exodus) is a continuation of the Genesis story. Genesis 46:8-27 similarly lists the sons of Israel who came to Egypt, along with their households, or families, giving the total number as 70. The last verses of Genesis are also concerned with Abraham's offspring and their future (Genesis 50:22-26). Exodus picks up the thread. Right away one sees that Exodus, then, concerns the descendants of Abraham.

²⁸ T. Desmond Alexander, and David W. Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, (Downers Grove, USA: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 249.

In the words of Pawson, “exhoddos” in Greek means “way out or exit”, i.e., “ex” is “out” and “hoddos” is “way”.²⁹

More so, the title "Exodus" is a Latin word derived from the Greek 'ΕΞΟΔΟΣ, EKSODOS, the name given to the book by those who translated it into Greek. The word *exodus* means "road out," or "exit," or "departure" and refers to the key event in the book, the Divine act of deliverance at the sea that enabled the people of God to escape from Egyptian oppression.³⁰ The name was retained also by the Vulgate, the Latin version; by the Jewish author Philo, who was a contemporary of Christ; and the Syriac version.³¹

In the Hebrew the book is named after its first two words שמותואלה ve'elleshemoth ("and these are the names of..."), a phrase that gives a clear indication of close relationship with the preceding narrative of Genesis. Among the Jews, the name is often shortened to simply שמות shemoth. The same phrase occurs in Genesis 46:8, where it likewise introduces a list of the names of those Israelites "who went to Egypt with Jacob" (Exodus 1:1). Thus Exodus was not intended to exist separately, but was thought of as a continuation of the narrative that began in Genesis.³²

Exodus carries key Genesis themes forward and in turn provides the essential backdrop for what happens in the rest of the Pentateuch. Exodus may be considered the centre of the Pentateuch, especially in view of the deliverance, the giving of the law at Mount Sinai and the construction of the tabernacle. In its broadest outlines the book may be structured

²⁹ David Pawson, *Unlocking the Bible: A Unique Overview of the Whole Bible* (Great Britain: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 99.

³⁰ David Darnell, *In-depth Bible Commentary*, 1, <http://www.indephtbible.org>, (accessed March 27, 2015).

³¹ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, *Volume 2* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 287.

³² Darnell, *In-depth Bible Commentary*, 1.

as follows: Israel in Egypt, Its deliverance by God and Its response (Exodus 1:1 - 15:21); Israel in the Wilderness and God's Providence (Exodus 15:22 - 18:27); and Israel at Sinai (Exodus 19:1 - 40:38).

2.1.1 Authorship and Date

The study of Exodus has usually been joined with the study of the Pentateuch as a whole. The traditional understanding of Moses as the author of the Pentateuch, though still affirmed by some, has usually been set aside in favour of a more complex understanding of origins.³³ Building on the concept of multiple authors (The Documentary Hypothesis), many scholars came to the agreement that the Pentateuch was composed of four main documents, many scholars contributed to the idea of four sources; however Julius Wellhausen (1844 - 1918) did more to promote the ideas of source documents. The four sources used the word such as Yahwistic (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomic (D), and Priestly (P), Wellhausen dates these sources as Y (840 B.C), E (700 B.C), D (621 B.C), and P (500 - 450 B.C). The impact of this hypothesis was so great that by 1890 most of the biblical scholars rejected the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch with the exception of the most conservative biblical scholars.³⁴ In the words of David Hinson, the Torah can be called 'the book of Moses' if we [the author's assertion] mean by this that it is the book which tells about him [Moses], rather than the book written by him.³⁵

Constable writes that, Moses, who lived from about 1525 to 1405 B.C., wrote Exodus (17:14; 24:4; 34:4, 27- 29). He could have written it under the inspiration of the Holy

³³ Alexander, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, 251.

³⁴ Isaac Badu-Danso, Lecture notes: *Old Testament General*, 2012 Edition (Kumasi, Ghana: Christian Service University College), 2.

³⁵ David F. Hinson, *The Books of the Old Testament* (London, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 43.

Spirit any time after the events recorded (after about 1444 B.C.). He may have written it during the year the Israelites camped at the base of Mt. Sinai. He may have done so during the 38-year period of wandering in the wilderness following the Israelites' failure to enter the land from Kadesh Barnea (cf. Num. 13-14; ca. 1443-1405 B.C.). On the other hand he may have written it on the plains of Moab just before his death (cf. 16:35).³⁶

According to the Expositor's Bible Commentary, there are several internal claims in Exodus that directly ascribe authorship to Moses (Israel's victory over Amalek 7:14; the Ten Commandments 34:4, 27-29; he wrote down everything the LORD had said 24:4; the Book of the Covenant 20:22-23:33, and other Old Testament books such as Joshua 1:7, 8:31-32, I Kings 2:3, II Kings 14:6, Ezra 6:18, Nehemiah 13:1, Daniel 9:1-13, Malachi 4:4). The New Testament writers likewise support Mosaic authorship of the Book of Exodus (Mark 7:10, 12:26, Luke 2:22-23, John 5:46-47, 7:19, Acts 3:22, Rom 10:5).³⁷

In concluding, one can see that the above hypotheses were propounded with a view to providing a solution to the problem of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. But whether or not Moses is the author of the Pentateuch is not the issue rather why it is claimed that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch is the cardinal issue. Asante pontificates that, the centrality of the *Torah* in the religion and culture of Ancient Israelites; the perception of the *Torah* as the Canon of Canons demands an authoritative figure like Moses as the brain behind the *Torah*.³⁸ Now, the claim that Moses wrote the Pentateuch is to be agreed as a fundamental part of the authoritative nature of the Pentateuch itself. Jesus in the Gospel accounts made a lot of reference to Moses as the

³⁶ Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Exodus*, 2015 Edition, 1, Sonic Light: <http://www.soniclight.com/> (accessed March 27, 2015).

³⁷ The Expositor's Bible Commentary, *Volume 2*, 287-288.

³⁸ Emmanuel Asante, *Topics in Old Testament Studies* (Accra, Ghana: SonLife Printing Press and Services, 2005), 108.

main character in the Pentateuch and thus recognized him as the author of the Pentateuch. (John 3:14-15; 5:46-47; 6:31-32; 7:9, 23; Mark 7:10; 10:3-5; 12:19, 26; Luke 2:22,; 5:14; 16:29-31; 24:27, 44; Matthew 19:4-6; 24:37-39; et al).

2.1.2 Purpose of Writing

The Book of Exodus is an account of redemption from bondage, leading to consecration of the covenant and the pitching of God's royal tent in the earth--all through the ministry of a chosen mediator [Moses]. And it challenges the reader to believe that the story discloses God's purpose in history--the purpose He intends to fulfill through Israel.³⁹ It tells a story about what God did for them, and of what He demanded from them.⁴⁰

2.1.3 Historical Context

The book of Exodus depicts a journey. It begins in Egypt. It ends in a tent.⁴¹The passage of this study takes place in the wilderness. Moses had fled from Egypt after Pharaoh sought to kill him. In Exodus 3:1, it is told that he (Moses) is married and is working for his father-in-law Jethro.

The story resumes when Moses, while tending his flocks, arrives at Horeb, the mountain of God, which is also known as Mount Sinai. It was here that he encounters God in the form of a flame in the midst of a bush. The passage describes this theophany⁴², during which God enters into a dialogue with Moses. In this encounter, God disclosed His plan

³⁹ Darnell, *In-depth Bible Commentary*, 9.

⁴⁰ John H. Dobson, *A Guide to the Book of Exodus* (London, Great Britain: University Press, 1997), 1.

⁴¹ Scott Grant, *A Study Series in Exodus*, 15/11/1999, 1, <http://www.pbc.org/dp/grant/exodus/index.html> (accessed March 20, 2015).

⁴² Theophany means an appearance of God or a god. it was derived from two Greek words "theos" which means "God or a god" and "phaneros" which also means "an appearance or manifestation"

or intention to Moses, that is, to use Moses as a vessel to lead His people out of their bondage in Egypt.

2.2 The Hebrew Text: Exodus 8:1

(Exodus 8:1)

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל־פַּרְעֹה נֹטֵה אֶת־יָדְךָ בְּמַטְּךָ עַל־הַנְּהָרֹת עַל־הַיְאֹרִים
וְעַל־הָאֲגָמִים וְהָעֵל אֶת הַצְּפָרְדֵּי עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

2.3 Literal Translation of the Text (Exodus 8:1)

And Yahweh said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says Yahweh, “Let my people go, that they may serve me.

2.4 Exegesis of the Text (Exodus 8:1)

From the passage it can be seen that God is concerned about the deliverance of His people (Israel) from their bondage. God told Moses to tell the Israelites that Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had promised to bring them out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. The Exodus 8:1 pericope, however, contains a grave command from God to the Egyptian king, Pharaoh. The contest in this stern overwhelming command was clearly a war between the true God Yahweh and Pharaoh himself a pagan deity and acknowledged head of the complex paganism of antique Egypt.

SYNTACTICAL ANALYSIS:

Verse 1

Key Words Used:

וַיֹּאמֶר

וַיֹּאמֶר Prefixed vav hippux (And, so when, now); אָמַר 'amar, Qal perfect verb 3rd person masculine singular (he) i.e. to say, speak, utter

יְהוָה

Yehovah proper noun, no gender, no number, no state (Self-Existent or Eternal, Jehovah, Jewish national name of God)

אֶל-מֹשֶׁה

אֶל 'el a participle preposition “to” denoting motion towards, but occasionally used of a quiescent position, i.e. near, with or among; מֹשֶׁה Mosheh “Moses” proper name masculine

בָּא

bo', Qalperfect verb 3rd person masculine singular (he) i.e. to enter, to come, to go

אֶל-פְּרָעָה

אל 'el a participle preposition “to” denoting motion towards, but occasionally used of a quiescent position, i.e. near, with or among; פרעה Par'ôh “Pharaoh” noun masculine and a common title of the king in Egypt.

ואמר

ו Prefixed vav conjunction (And, so when, now); אמר 'amar, Qal perfect verb 3rd person masculine singular (he) i.e. to say, speak, utter;

אליו

אל 'el a participle preposition “to” denoting motion towards, but occasionally used of a quiescent position, i.e. near, with or among; ם 'ô' pronominal suffix, i.e., ‘him’ 3rd person masculine singular

כה

koh particle adverb (like this, thus or so, here or hither, now)

שלח

Shalach שלח Qal perfect verb 3rd person masculine singular i.e. to send away, for, or out

אֶת־עַמִּי

אֶת' eth particle direct object marker; עַם'am, "people" noun masculine with pronominal suffix י' 'my' 1st person common singular

עָבַד

'avad' Qal perfect verb 3rd person masculine singular i.e. do work, to serve

Translation (Exodus 8:1):

And Yahweh said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says Yahweh, "Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Moses the minister of God is represented in this Chapter, as prosecuting his great commission in the chastisement of the king of Egypt and his servants, for the deliverance of Israel from bondage.⁴³

Go unto Pharaoh, according to Whedon, the going we [he] must think of as being from Goshen to Zoan, Pharaoh's capital. Zoan we [he] may suppose to be the scene of these

⁴³Hawker, Robert, D.D. "Commentary on Exodus 8:1". "Hawker's Poor Man's Commentary". <http://m.studylight.org/commentaries/pmc/exodus-8.html>. 1828, (accessed September, 1, 2016).

interviews between prophet and king.⁴⁴ Coke adds, to render Pharaoh wholly inexcusable, sufficient warning was always given him of every approaching punishment.⁴⁵

The infliction of the first plague, as a judgment of God, produced no good effect upon Pharaoh; and Moses was commanded to wait on the king and threaten him, in the event of his confirmed obstinacy, with a new and different visitation. Since Pharaoh's answer is not given, it may be inferred to have been unfavourable, because the rod was again raised.⁴⁶

In the words of Calvin, God demands of Pharaoh His own peculiar right, viz., that His [God] people should serve Him [God], but out of the land of Egypt, that His worship might be separate and pure from all defilement, for He desired (as was before said) by this separation of His people to condemn the superstitions of the Egyptians.⁴⁷

Nicoll says, perfect freedom is not the thing demanded of Pharaoh, nor is this the prize of their high calling held out before the eyes of the Israelites. To serve God is the perfect freedom held out: to change masters, to be rid of him who had no claim to their allegiance, and to be permitted without hindrance to serve Him who was indeed their Lord and their God. This was the boon offered to the children of Israel, and demanded on their account by Moses as the ambassador of God.⁴⁸ He further adds, meanwhile there

⁴⁴Whedon, Daniel. "Commentary on Exodus 8:1". "Whedon's Commentary on the Bible". [//m.studylight.org/commentaries/whe/exodus-8.html](http://m.studylight.org/commentaries/whe/exodus-8.html). 1874-1909, (accessed September, 1, 2016).

⁴⁵Coke, Thomas. "Commentary on Exodus 8:1". Thomas Coke Commentary on the Holy Bible. [//m.studylight.org/commentaries/tcc/exodus-8.html](http://m.studylight.org/commentaries/tcc/exodus-8.html)". 1801-1803, (accessed September, 1, 2016).

⁴⁶Robert, Jamieson, D.D.; Fausset, A. R.; Brown, David. "Commentary on Exodus 8:1". "Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible - Unabridged". [//m.studylight.org/commentaries/jfu/exodus-8.html](http://m.studylight.org/commentaries/jfu/exodus-8.html)". 1871-8, (accessed September, 1, 2016).

⁴⁷Calvin, John. "Commentary on Exodus 8:1". "Calvin's Commentary on the Bible". [//m.studylight.org/commentaries/cal/exodus-8.html](http://m.studylight.org/commentaries/cal/exodus-8.html)". 1840-57, (accessed September, 2, 2016).

⁴⁸Nicoll, William R. "Commentary on Exodus 8:1". "Sermon Bible Commentary". [//m.studylight.org/commentaries/sbc/exodus-8.html](http://m.studylight.org/commentaries/sbc/exodus-8.html), (accessed September, 2, 2016).

was no excuse for the tyrant, when, with sacrilegious boldness, he presumed to deprive God of His just honor. Therefore, in refusing to let them go, he was declared not only to be cruel, but also a despiser of God.⁴⁹

In the view of Gill, And the Lord spake unto Moses,...go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, thus saith the Lord, let my people go, that they may serve me; mentioning neither time nor place, where, when, and how long they should serve him, for which their dismissal was required, but insist on it in general.⁵⁰

Clarke argues, God, in great mercy to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, gives them notice of the evils he [He] intended to bring upon them if they continued in their obstinacy. Having had therefore such warning, the evil might have been prevented by a timely humiliation and return to God.⁵¹ God's people had been serving Pharaoh, but now God demanded that His people served Jehovah! "Let my people go, that they may serve me."⁵²

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the historical background to the book of Exodus, its authorship and date, purpose of writing, and the historical context. Also, the Hebrew text, the translation of the text, and the exegesis of the text on Exodus 8:1 was looked at.

In the next chapter the researcher discusses the general issues concerning the phrase “the people of God”, which includes: Who were they? Why and when were they called the people of God? What is the nature of the Church in the Old Testament? What is the

⁴⁹William R. "Commentary on Exodus 8:1".

⁵⁰Gill, John. "Commentary on Exodus 8:1". "The New John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible". <http://m.studylight.org/commentaries/geb/exodus-8.html>. 1999, (accessed September, 3, 2016).

⁵¹Clarke, Adam. "Commentary on Exodus 8:1". "The Adam Clarke Commentary". <http://m.studylight.org/commentaries/acc/exodus-8.html>. 1832, (accessed September, 3, 2016).

⁵²Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on Exodus 8:1". "Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament". <http://m.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/exodus-8.html>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999, (accessed September, 3, 2016).

nature of the Church in the New Testament? And the Metaphors or images used to describe the People of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

CHAPTER THREE

GENERAL ISSUES ABOUT “THE PEOPLE OF GOD”

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter of the study addressed the historical background to the book of Exodus, its authorship and date, purpose of writing, and the historical context. Also, the Hebrew text, the translation of the text, and the exegesis of the text on Exodus 8:1 was looked at.

This chapter is a critical word study of the phrase “the people of God” which includes; Who were they? Why and when were they called the people of God? What is the nature of the Church in the Old Testament? What is the nature of the Church in the New Testament? And the Metaphors or images used to describe the People of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

3.1 Who were the “People of God”?

In the Old Testament, the “**people of God**” were those who were associated with God’s purposes and promises related to Israel, and especially to the God of Israel.⁵³ The phrase “the people of God” was first used, by God in the second book of Moses, i.e., the book of Exodus Chapter 6:7 which carried stipulation in this covenant between humankind and God. God promised deliverance, in return the people owed obedience. The nation Israel became the people of God. They were a people with a very special calling. They were to be a “**holy nation**” and a “**kingdom of priests.**” God therefore made a covenant with them and gave them His law as a standard of His holiness to which they were to

⁵³The People of God in God’s Perfect Plan, <https://bible.org/seriespage/9-people-god-god-s-perfect-plan> pages 2-10 (date accessed February 20, 2016).

conform.⁵⁴ Not all Israelites were included among the people of God, because they did not trust in God and keep His commandments (cf. Exodus 12:15).

Moreover, the expression "people of God" is seen in the epistles of Hebrews 4:9 and 11:25, and the expression "his [His] people", i.e., God's people, appears in the book of Revelation 21:3. The second book of Corinthians 6:16 mentions the same promises to the New Testament believer "...I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" which is a parallel to Exodus 6:7, which says, "and I will take you for 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."

Wright argues, for Israel was not just the people of God (many nations would claim that in one form or another), but specifically the people of Yahweh, and that in itself meant a covenant commitment to a certain kind of society that reflected Yahweh's character, values, priorities and goals.⁵⁵ The Israelites were called to be God's special people. That is, they were called to be God's ministers and so their calling was very special.

Furthermore, they were to be a "holy nation" and a "kingdom of priests". God intentionally called Israel to be His priest to the entire world in that they might mirror His (God) character, values, etc., and through that He might save the world.

Also, in the New Testament, the "**people of God**" are those who have come to faith in Israel's promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, and who are thus members of the body of Christ, the Church.⁵⁶

⁵⁴The People of God in God's Perfect Plan, <https://bible.org/seriespage/9-people-god-god-s-perfect-plan> pages 2-10 (date accessed February 20, 2016).

⁵⁵ Wright, "The People of God", *Themelios* 16.1 (Oct/Nov 1990): 4-10.

⁵⁶The People of God in God's Perfect Plan, <https://bible.org/seriespage/9-people-god-god-s-perfect-plan> pages 2-10(date accessed February 20, 2016).

The New Testament Christians comprise both Jews and Gentiles who had come to believe in Jesus Christ, and also the “assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven” refers to the Old Testament believers. In the view of Packer, the New Testament church is the historical continuation of the Old Testament Israel. The fundamental idea of biblical ecclesiology about the church is seen as the covenant⁵⁷ people of God.⁵⁸ The author maintains that both the Old Testament believers (people of God) and New Testament believers (people of God) are in a union since the New Testament believers are in continuation of the Old Testament believers. Thus, the people of God comprise both, i.e. the Old and the New Testament believers.

Stanley maintains that, the New Testament believers viewed the Church as a people - a people brought together by the Holy Spirit – a people bound to each other through Christ – hence, a people standing in covenant with God.⁵⁹ Here, Stanley is emphatic that the New Testament believers are also a special people of God who also stand in covenant with Him (God).

In this wise, membership to the people of God comes not by physical birth but by faith in Christ and baptism. Baptism, the New Testament initiatory sign corresponding to circumcision, represents primarily union with Christ in His death and resurrection, which is the sole way of entry into the church.⁶⁰

Paul made this trustworthy statement when he was addressing the Galatians, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26 Lexham English Bible).

⁵⁷ According to James I. Packer, Covenant is a defined relationship of promise and commitment which binds the parties concerned to perform whatever duties toward each other their relationship may involve.

⁵⁸ Packer, “The Nature of the Church,” 242.

⁵⁹ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 465.

⁶⁰ Packer, “The Nature of the Church,” 244.

3.2 Why and when were they called the “People of God”?

In the Old Testament, God intentionally chose Israel and made them His people by a covenant of grace (Deut. 5:6) and also gave them the Law which was His (God) requirements for life for them (Deut. 5:7-21) and thus the Sinai declaration. More so, they were to separate themselves from the other nations (Deut. 7:1-6). They were to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength and also not to forget all that Yahweh has commanded them to do (Deut. 6:4-9).

God’s Word makes a point of the fact that God has chosen a people for His own possession and purposes.⁶¹ The concept “the people of God” came into being as God’s own initiative and God’s perfect plan for creation included a people whom He chose to set apart as His own. God set apart the nation of Israel as the object of His blessings, and as the instrument through which these blessings would be poured out on other nations (cf. Genesis 12:1-3). It is this people who are to demonstrate God’s character to others. They are to be holy, as He is holy, and gracious as He is gracious.⁶² The Mosaic covenant established the guidelines for God’s dealings with His people on the basis of their obedience to His Law. When Israel, as a nation, obeyed God’s Law, God would bless them. When His people forsook His Law, curses awaited them.⁶³

According to Grenz, these Old Testament references may have formed the background for Jesus’ promise that He would build His congregation (Matt. 16:18; 18:17).⁶⁴

⁶¹The People of God in God’s Perfect Plan, <https://bible.org/seriespage/9-people-god-god-s-perfect-plan> pages 2-10 (date accessed February 20, 2016).

⁶²The People of God in God’s Perfect Plan, <https://bible.org/seriespage/9-people-god-god-s-perfect-plan> pages 2-10 (date accessed February 20, 2016).

⁶³The People of God in God’s Perfect Plan, <https://bible.org/seriespage/9-people-god-god-s-perfect-plan> pages 2-10 (date accessed February 20, 2016).

⁶⁴Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 464.

As the Church is a priestly people, all its members having direct access to God through Christ's mediation, so it is a ministering people, all its members holding in trust from Christ gifts of ministry (i.e., service) for edifying of the one body.⁶⁵ Whereas in Israel only a few were selected from among the people to act as priests, in the church all the people of God belong to the priestly order, and the ministry of the priesthood is shared by all.⁶⁶

In the words of Chafer, the church is seen to be a pilgrim band of witnesses. They are not of this world even as Christ is not of this world (Jn. 17:16), and as the Father has sent the Son into the world, so has the Son sent these witnesses into the world.⁶⁷ In the words of Grenz, the ministry of the church is seen as a community that glorifies God through worship, edification, and outreach.⁶⁸

3.3 What is the nature of the “Church” in the Old Testament?

The people of God in the Old Testament were called into existence by God's act of sovereign election. Packer argues that the church is not simply a New Testament phenomenon.⁶⁹ Packer sees the church's presence in the Old Testament times. According to Reymond, the church of God in the Old Testament times, rooted initially and prophetically in the protevangelism (Gen. 3:15) and covenantally in the Genesis patriarchs, blossomed mainly within the nation of Israel.⁷⁰ He further adds, the true church of the Old Testament was the spiritual seed of Abraham, that “Israel” within the

⁶⁵Packer, “The Nature of the Church,” 245.

⁶⁶Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 466.

⁶⁷ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 241.

⁶⁸Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 461.

⁶⁹Packer, “The Nature of the Church,” 242.

⁷⁰Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 806.

nation of Israel.⁷¹ The people of Israel sprang from Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob.

According to Drane, in the Old Testament times, to be a member of the people of God was not simply a matter of behaving in the same way as other like-minded people.⁷²

He further points out that it also involved inclusion in the covenant relationship that God had established with Israel's ancestor Abraham, and with Moses at Mt. Sinai.⁷³

Murray observes that, the assembly of God's people was not a passing phase of Israel's history; it was not ephemeral...it was a permanent feature of Israel's identity.⁷⁴ The exodus redemption led to Israel's assembly, and this assembly, as Murray sees, then became the definite assembly for Israel. In this assembly the people were to "stand before God", a representation depicting solemnity and worship, in order to hear God's words and receive His law.

Two words in particular, according to Reymond, came to be used to designate the people of God [in the Old Testament]: *עדה*, 'edah and *קהל*, qahal, as a result of the exodus-redemption.⁷⁵ Reymond further adds, the later books of the Old Testament, *קהל*, qahal, was translated by *ἐκκλησία*, *ekklēsia* (from *ἐκκαλέω*, *ekkaleō*, meaning "to summon forth [into assembly]").⁷⁶ So, as the author sees, *ekklēsia* (its Septuagint translation) became the most common term in the New Testament to designate the people of God. Grenz hits the eye of the bull by this statement, the Jewish scholars who translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek (the Septuagint) chose *ekklesia* to render the Hebrew word

⁷¹Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 806.

⁷² John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament* (Oxford, England: Lion Publishing plc, 1986), 433.

⁷³ John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament*, 433.

⁷⁴ John Murray, *The Nature and Unity of the Church*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 2:322.

⁷⁵Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 810.

⁷⁶Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 807.

qahal (“assembly”), which the historical writers used to refer to Israel as the “congregation” or “assembly of the Lord”.⁷⁷

3.4 What is the nature of the Church in the New Testament?

The Church in the New Testament is revealed to be the central purpose of God. Moreover, it is the focal point of God’s new reconciled society, i.e., the church of Jesus. According to Chafer, the church is revealed to be the company of believers formed of both Jew and Gentile who are called out of the world and joined together in one living union by the baptism of the Spirit.⁷⁸ Fundamentally, the church of Jesus Christ is neither a building nor an organization. Rather, it is a people, a special people, a people who see themselves as standing in relationship to the God who saves them and to each other as those who share in this salvation.⁷⁹

The Old Testament quite obviously provides the background to the New Testament’s representation of the church as God’s εκκλησία, ekklēsia.⁸⁰ Now, it is clear then that the Old Testament background of the word εκκλησία, ekklēsia, is rich with theological meaning. According to Reymond, it is the most vivid expression for the redeemed kingdom of God, depicting the sovereign God as One who dwells in the midst of His people and who summons them to assemble before Him. In the Gospel accounts Jesus used the term εκκλησία, ekklēsia (cf. Matt. 16:18; 18:17). Matt. 16:16-18 “...on this rock I will build my church.” Here, according to Evans, is the Church in prophecy and

⁷⁷Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 464.

⁷⁸ Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 236.

⁷⁹Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 464.

⁸⁰ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 810.

promise; the first mention of the Church in the New Testament.⁸¹ In Matt. 18:15-20, as Evans pontificates, our Lord recognizes the fact of the Church, and also that it has the divine seal and sanction in the exercising of the power of the keys.⁸²

Grudem had maintained that, this process whereby Christ builds the church is just a continuation of the pattern established by God in the Old Testament whereby he [Him] called people to Himself to be a worshipping assembly before him [Him].⁸³

Essentially, the church is not a human organisation as such, but a divinely created fellowship of sinners who trust a common Saviour, and are one with each other because they are all one with Him in a union realized by the Holy Spirit.⁸⁴ Packer further adds, as the individual believer is a new creation in Christ, raised with Him out of death into life, possessed of and led by the life-giving Holy Spirit, so also is the church as a whole.⁸⁵ So, the Church of Jesus Christ is viewed by Christians as consisting of the people who have been called out of sin into salvation.

Apostle Peter in his first epistle (1 Peter 2:9-10) describes the Christian church in thorough-going Old Testament fashion as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and holy nation, a peculiar people...which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God”.

3.5 Metaphors of the People of God in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament Scriptures, a wide range of metaphors or images were used to describe what the people of God were like.

⁸¹ William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 184.

⁸² Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*, 184.

⁸³ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 854.

⁸⁴ Packer, “The Nature of the Church,” 242.

⁸⁵ Packer, “The Nature of the Church,” 244.

In the Old Testament the metaphor of a Family was used. A variety of family metaphors were demonstrated among the Old Testament writers. The people of Israel were seen as children of God, “You are children of the LORD your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave your forehead bald for the sake of the dead” (Deuteronomy 14:1).

God is also seen as a Father, “They will come back shedding tears of contrition. I will bring them back praying prayers of repentance. I will lead them besides streams of water, along smooth paths where they will never stumble. I will do this because I am Israel’s father; Ephraim is my firstborn son” (Jeremiah 31:9). Moreover, God is also seen as a Mother, Can a woman forget her baby who nurses at her breast? Can she withhold compassion from the child she has borne? Even if mothers were to forget, I could never forget you!” (Isaiah 49:15; cf Hos. 11:3, 4; 13:8; Isa. 42:14; 66:13; Ps. 123:2-3; 131:2; Deu. 32:11-12, 18).

Another family metaphor is husband. The “people of Israel” is married to God, i.e., God’s marriage relationship with Israel. So, here God is seen as a Husband, “For your husband is the one who made you – the LORD who commands armies is his name. He is your protector, the Holy One of Israel. He is called “God of the entire earth” (Isaiah 54:5).

The brotherhood imagery under the family metaphor was also used. In the Old Testament the people of Israel is seen as brothers. In the second book of Chronicles God charged the south kingdom (Judah) not to fight the northern kingdom (Israel) because they are all brothers, The LORD says this: “Do not attack and make war with your brothers. Each of

you go home, for I have caused this to happen.” They obeyed the LORD and called off the attack against Jeroboam” (2 Chronicles 11:4).

The vine or vineyard is a symbol frequently associated with God’s people in the Old Testament. In Psalm 80, David uses the metaphor of the vine to describe how God rescued the Israelites out of Egypt, ‘planted it... cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land.’ (Psalm 80:8-9).

The metaphor of light, i.e., light to the Gentile world was used by the Old Testament writers. In the book of Isaiah 49:6, the People of God in the Old Testament times were also called to be a “light to the Gentiles,” showing them the truth so they too could enter into God’s blessings (Isaiah 49:6).

Another metaphor is a Royal Priesthood and a Holy Nation. The people of Israel were to be a “holy nation” and a “kingdom of priests.” “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shall speak unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 19:6). God therefore made a covenant with them and gave them His law as a standard of His holiness to which they were to conform.

A House metaphor is also used to represent the people of Israel. Israel is seen here as a house, “And Moses ascended into the mountain of God. And [called him God] from the mountain, saying, Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob” (Exodus 19:3).

Furthermore sheep or flock was used as a metaphor to represent the people of Israel as recorded by the Old Testament writers. In 1 Kings 22:17, “Micaiah said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep that have no shepherd. Then the LORD said, ‘They have no master. They should go home in peace’” (1 Kings 22:17).

In the book of Ezekiel, Yahweh is seen as a Shepherd who feeds His sheep, “I myself will feed my sheep and I myself will make them lie down, declares the sovereign LORD” (Ezekiel 34:15).

3.6 Metaphors of the People of God in the New Testament

Metaphors and images are widely used in the New Testament Scriptures to describe what the Church (the People of God) is like. It should be noticed that these metaphors and images used by the New Testament writers provide insight into the nature of their fellowship. There are several family images used.

Jesus used many images or metaphors to describe the relationships among those He had called together as His followers; one of the most common of these metaphors was the family. The Gospel writers records Jesus calling his disciples family, “And pointing toward his disciples he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Mat. 12:49-50).

Moreover, Apostle Paul sees the Church as a family when he charged Timothy to act as if all the church members, that he presides, were members of a larger family: “Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity” (1 Tim. 5:1-2). Jesus encouraged his disciples to address God in prayer as 'Father', and to see one another as brothers and sisters (Mat. 6:9-13). In the Pauline letters God is also seen as heavenly Father (Eph. 3:14), and Christians are His sons and daughters, “...and I will be a father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,” says the All-Powerful Lord” (2 Cor. 6:18).

Apostle Paul also refers to the Church as the bride of Christ, a somewhat different family metaphor. He pontificates that the intimacy between a husband and wife “refers to Christ and the Church” (Eph. 5:32); and he further says in 2 Cor. 11:2, “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy, because I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.” The Bride becomes the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 21:2).

The church is also compared to branches on a vine. Jesus views His followers as branches, “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me – and I in him – bears much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing” (John 15:5).

Sheep or flock is also used as a metaphor to represent the Church as recorded by the New Testament writers. Jesus views His followers as sheep, “My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; no one will snatch them from my hand” (John 10:27-28).

The metaphor of light, i.e., light to the world was used by the New Testament writers. In the book of Matthew 5:14, the followers of Christ were also called to be a “light to the world,” You are the light of the world. A city located on a hill cannot be hidden (Matthew 5:14).

Another familiar metaphor views the church as the body of Christ. Apostle Paul uses two different metaphors of the human body when he speaks of the church. He speaks of the church as one body of which Christ is the head (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18; 2:19). This body metaphor views the church as her relationship to Christ, who is the head. According to Evans, there are a vital relation between Christ and the Church, both partaking of the same life, just as there is between the physical head and the body.⁸⁶ The second body metaphor when Apostle Paul speaks of the church is the relationship of the members to

⁸⁶ Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*, 186.

one another. Here, the Church is seen as an organism, not an organization. The Apostle Paul explains this in Rom. 12:4, 5, “For just as in one body we have many members, and not all the members serve the same function, so we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members who belong to one another” (Rom. 12:4, 5; cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:1-5, 16).

Another profound metaphor is the ‘Royal Priesthood and the Nation of God. Here, the New Testament writers the Apostle Peter to be precise, view the church as the royal priesthood and the nation of God, “But you are *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own*, so that you may *proclaim the virtues* of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet.2:9). As the church is a priestly people, all its members having direct access to God through Christ’s mediation, so it is a ministering people, all its members holding in trust from Christ gifts of ministry (i.e., service) for the edifying of the one body.⁸⁷ Grenz has something to say here, this metaphor is readily connected with the Old Testament rootage of *ekklesia*. Just as Israel had been chosen to be the people of God – God’s nation – so now the New Testament church enjoys this relationship.⁸⁸

According to the New Testaments writers the Church is also seen as *a temple, a building, a habitation, a dwelling-place for God’s Spirit*. In 1 Cor. 3:9-17, Christ is the chief cornerstone and the apostles the builders; the whole building is held in place by Christ. In Israel the temple was in some special way God’s earthly dwelling place (2 Chron. 6:1-2). Now, however, the focal point of God’s presence is no longer a special building but a

⁸⁷Packer, “The Nature of the Church,” 245.

⁸⁸Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 466.

fellowship of his people.⁸⁹ Grudem also add to this, this picture of the church as God's new temple should increase our awareness of God's very presence dwelling in our midst as we meet.⁹⁰

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we looked at the phrase "the people of God" which include; Who were they? Why and when were they called the people of God? What is the nature of the Church in the Old Testament? What is the nature of the Church in the New Testament? And the Metaphors or images used to describe the People of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In the next chapter the researcher analyses the following: analysis of findings, the "People of God" in the Old Testament as compared to the New Testament Church. Again, the implications of findings deals with, the Significance of the phrase the "People of God" in contemporary Christianity; the Significance of the metaphors used to represent the people of God" in contemporary Christianity.

⁸⁹Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 467.

⁹⁰Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 859.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the phrase “the people of God” which include; Who were they? Why and when were they called the people of God? What is the nature of the Church in the Old Testament? What is the nature of the Church in the New Testament? And the Metaphors or images used to describe the People of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In this chapter, the researcher examines the following: analysis of findings, the “People of God” in the Old Testament as compared to the New Testament Church. Again, the implications of findings deals with, the Significance of the phrase the “People of God” in contemporary Christianity; the Significance of the metaphors used to represent the people of God” in contemporary Christianity.

4.1 Analysis of Findings

From the passage (Exodus 8:1), it can be said that the Israelites (i.e., the People of God) had been serving Pharaoh as slaves in Egypt, but God demanded that His people should serve Him alone; "Let my people go, that they may serve me". He is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—the God who promised, and has always been with humankind. He is also the great I AM; thus His self-existence and the unchangeableness of His nature. He is the "eternal present," because He always was and always will be. Because He is outside time, He is always in the present; He does not

change; He is immutable; the One who is with human today and who will be with them forevermore.

It was also noticed that Moses was charged by God, Himself, to go in to the king of Egypt (Pharaoh) to release the Israelites (i.e., the People of God) at once, to go to the land that God had chosen for His own worship. The main feature of the people of God at this stage is that they were a theocracy in reality. And thus the command rendered Pharaoh wholly inexcusable.

Furthermore, it was found out that the People of God in that verse represents the people of Israel which came into being as God's own initiative, as indicated in Exodus 6:7⁹¹, which always designates a clear relationship. However, this relationship does not come through good deeds but rather it is a deliberate choice to follow God alone. God promised deliverance to His people and in return the people owed obedience to Him. One should note that not all Israelites were included among the people of God, because they did not trust in God and keep His commandments (cf. Exodus. 12:15).

More so, the God who, in the patriarchal narratives, had shown himself to be transcendent in the sense that he was neither bound to, nor very impressed by, the greatest of human imperial civilization, upholds the right of his people to freedom of worship in the midst of a state with other gods, including the pharaoh himself.⁹²

⁹¹ Exodus 6:7, and I will take you for 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. (Revised Standard Version, RSV, 1946, 1952, and 1971, USA).

⁹²Wright, "The People of God", *Themelios* 16.1 (Oct/Nov 1990): 4-10.

4.1.1 The “People of God” in the Old Testament as compared to the concept of the Church in the New Testament

The nation Israel became the people of God. They were a people with a very special calling. God intentionally called Israel to be His priest to the entire world in that they might mirror His (God) character, values, etc., and through that He might save the world.

Moreover, the expression "people of God" is seen in the epistles of Hebrews 4:9 and 11:25, and the expression "his [His] people", i.e., God's people, appears in the book of Revelation 21:3. The second book of Corinthians 6:16 mentions the same promises to the New Testament believer "...I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (RSV) which is a parallel to Exodus 6:7, which says, "and I will take you for 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" (RSV). The church incorporates into itself all the true people of God, and almost all the titles used of God's people in the Old Testament are in one place or another applied to the church in the New Testament.⁹³

In the previous chapter, it was noted that metaphors and images were widely used in the Old Testament and the New Testament Scriptures to describe what "the People of God" is like and thus provide insight into the nature of their fellowship. In the next paragraphs, I will be looking at the similarities that exist between those metaphors which were used by both the Old Testament and New Testament writers.

The family metaphor was used by both Old Testament and New Testament writers. In Deuteronomy 14:1 and Matthew 12:49-50, the people of God were seen as one family.

⁹³Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 862.

God is seen as Father in Jeremiah 31:9 and Eph. 3:14. In Isaiah 54:5 and 2 Cor. 11:2, God is seen as husband. In both Scriptures, i.e., 2 Chronicles 11:4 and 1 Tim. 5:1-2, the people of God are seen as brothers and sisters.

Another similar metaphor which was used by both Old Testament and New Testament writers was vine or vineyard metaphor. The people of God in the Old Testament were often associated with the vineyard imagery as seen in Psalm 80:8-9. The Church in the New Testament was also associated with the branches on the vine as used by Jesus in a statement in John 15:5.

The people of God in the Old Testament times were called to be light to the Gentile world as seen in Isaiah 49:6. In the book of Matthew 5:14, the New Testament Church was also called to be the light to the world.

The people of Israel were to be a royal priesthood and a holy nation as stated emphatically in Exodus 19:6. The Church in the New Testament is also called to be a royal priesthood and a holy nation of God as seen in 1 Peter 2:9.

Last but not least is the house metaphor. The imagery of a house as seen in Exodus 19:3 were used to represent the people of Israel. In 1 Corinthians 3:9-17, Apostle Paul also used the metaphor of a house to signify the New Testament Church.

Another profound imagery is the sheep or flock. In Ezekiel 34:15, Yahweh is seen as a Shepherd who feeds His sheep (i.e., the people of God in the Old Testament times). According to Jesus' statement as recorded in John 10:27-28, Christians (i.e., the followers of Christ) are seen as sheep or flock while as Jesus is the Shepherd.

4.2 Implications of Findings

In Biblical theology the phrase the "People of God" has always had much deeper meaning and significance. In the religious sense, the phrase the "People of God" is not a human invention, but has divine origin and is based on divine revelation.

4.2.1 The Significance of the phrase the "People of God" in contemporary Christianity

The people of God in the Old Testament epoch were called into existence by God's act of sovereign election. The New Testament Church is revealed to be the company of believers formed of both Jew and Gentile who are called out of the world and joined together in one living union by the baptism of the Spirit.⁹⁴

One should note, from the above statements, that the phrase the "People of God" indicates a clear relationship. However, this relationship does not come through good deeds but rather it is a deliberate choice to follow God alone. Here, one can see that the concept of the people of God has a strong bearing on Christian's relationship to God.

What contemporary Christians must think of is "unity" as the phrase the people of God denotes. The early Christians were very united as recorded in the book of Acts, "the group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but everything was held in common" (Acts 4:32). And because of their oneness or unity brought unto them all "great grace" from God (Acts 4:33). Here, too, one can detect that the concept of the people of God rules out individualistic

⁹⁴ Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 236.

ideology (i.e., the state of the world today). And more to this the Bible's emphasis on a people of God necessitates that we think and act collectively about our faith and duty and not just individually.

The concept of the people of God is also the kind of faith which produces obedience. Just as the people of God in the Old Testament were set apart by their obedience to God's Law, so those who trust in Jesus are to be known by their obedience: And looking at those who were sitting around him in a circle, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:34, 35).

Contemporary Christians must trust God fully for their full security or protection. They should note that the phrase the people of God are eternally secure because the One who has chosen them is faithful to keep them: "My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; no one will snatch them from my hand" (John 10:27, 28).

Furthermore, contemporary Christians must get that they are called to bear fruit: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that remains, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you" (John 15:16).

The concept of the people of God denotes God's own possession. Contemporary Christians are to understand the plans and purposes of God and they must surely understand His purpose to create a people for His own possession. From the beginning of time until now, God has been calling out a people for Himself.

Moreover, the phrase the people of God also signifies God's family (children). Contemporary Christians are to accept that they are God's children (God has no

grandchildren): “but to all who have received him – those who believe in his name – he has given the right to become God’s children– children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband’s decision, but by God” (John 1:12, 13).

Also, contemporary Christians must clearly understand that the dangers and temptations they are being confronted day-in and day-out are the same dangers and temptations that the people of God in the Old Testament era faced. So, this concept of the people of God must cause contemporary Christians to have no confidence in themselves but to trust only in God.

In addition, Christians’ mission today is basically the same as that given to the people of God in the Old Testament times. The people of God were to be a “light to the Gentile world.” Often, they did not go out from their land but those who wished to know and to serve God came to their land to worship God, along with His people. To be precise, people were to come to Jerusalem to seek God and to worship Him. In this age, the Christians have been called to go “outside the camp” as the Lord Jesus did (Hebrews 13:11-13). The church was not commanded to go to Jerusalem, but from Jerusalem, with the gospel.

Lastly, contemporary Christians should note that they are not different from, and indeed no better than, the people of God in the Old Testament times. With the privilege of being the “people of God” come the same dangers and the same responsibilities which were true of the “people of God” in the Old Testament era. When all is said and done, the “people of God” in this age will have done no better than the “people of God” in days gone by.

4.2.2 The Significance of the metaphors used to represent the people of God” in contemporary Christianity

One should note that analogies always get us closer to truth. In other words one should never rely on an abstraction if one can get an analogy. Metaphors and imagery are literary devices which help one to express diverse and often complex matters in fresh and simple ways. Now, let us look at the significance of these biblical metaphors used.

The family metaphor has a lot of images used by biblical writers and each image can help us to appreciate more of the richness of the privilege that God has given to His children. One of the family metaphors is, God was seen as our Heavenly Father. In Hebrew the word “father” is written as אָב “āv”. In the Ancient Hebrew pictographic script⁹⁵, אָב was written as אב which means a strong/leader of the house. So, from this word picture, one can see God as a Strong/Leader of the house. The Fatherhood of God indicates His relationship and authority to His children. In the book of Hosea 11:1-11, God discloses His parenthood of Israel by delivering them from slavery and bestowing on them that anxious, proud and gentle love which is so typical of parents with a newly arrived child.

In the New Testament, Believers refer to God as Father based on their privileges as children of God. They have access to God because they have been reconciled to Him through Christ (Eph. 2:11-12). Being children of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords calls us (believers) to a higher standard, a different way of life and a greater hope. As we come to understand the true nature of God as revealed in the Scriptures and how sinful

⁹⁵ The Hebrew alphabet was originally written using a pictographic script (i.e., the Ancient Hebrew Pictogram) before it evolved into this modernized Hebrew Script.

we are, the privilege of being able to call Him “Father” will take on a whole new meaning for us and help us understand God’s amazing grace.

Another family metaphor is being the children of God, i.e., brothers and sisters. Among Christians, however, whether Jew or Gentile, the word 'brethren' shows to the new spiritual family connection formed through common faith in Jesus Christ. The Greek terms *adelfoi*, *adelphoi* (brothers) and *adelfai*, *adelphai* (sisters) clearly address members of the believing communities and also a sign of social equality as well as communal solidarity. This imagery has the ideal capacity to accommodate the multifaceted realities of “belonging in the family” and also increase our love and fellowship with one another.

The people of Israel is married to God in the Old Testament and in the New Testament Christ is also seen as the husband for the Church, i.e., the husband and bride imagery. Petitioning any other being except God is idolatry, and this is also like adultery, i.e., having sexual relation outside marriage. So, the fact that the Church is like the bride of Christ that should arouse us, especially today’s church, to strive for greater purity and holiness, and also greater love for Christ and submission to Him.

Another metaphor is the Sheep or flock imagery. Psalm 23 portrays the Lord as a shepherd, guiding His sheep beside still waters and green pastures. Sheep are not bright animals, or defensive ones. They need lots of care. Jesus gives a beautiful picture when He says, ‘My sheep know my voice.’ That’s pretty intimate. Now, the question is, “how do you know someone by his or her voice?” To know someone by his or her voice is to spend a lot of time with them. Jacob in Genesis 48:15 described God as “the God who has been my (his) shepherd all my (his) life to this day”. In the Old Testament times, the people of Israel saw God as the Good Shepherd who could be trusted never to fail His

people, and as the Good Shepherd who cares for each individual, not only the flock as a whole. Believers must always look unto the Lord for His providence and directions. This sheep imagery also demands total obedience. More so, Yahweh as the Good Shepherd outlines the relationship and functions of the pastor to his flocks.

We can also see the vine or vineyard metaphor in both Testaments. Believers are seen as branches in a vine and this imagery should cause us to rest fully in Christ who is the vine. Any branch that has been cut from the vine will die. Christians today must come to understand that they are like branches in the vine (which is Christ Jesus) and so therefore must live as such by obeying His (Christ) words from hence is the source of life eternal.

Furthermore, the metaphor of light was used by both the writers of the Testaments. The people of Israel is seen as light to the gentile world and Christians are also seen as light to the world. Christians today must show forth their light in every side of their life in this dark world where evil is in abundance. We are called to lead those who are not in the light to the light. For this reason Christ came to this world to save us so that we can also save others.

Last but not least, is the imagery of the temple. A temple is a place where God's presence is seen and sacrifices are made to Him. This imagery was used by the Old Testament writers and the New Testament writers. Apostle Paul writes, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If someone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, which is what you are" (1 Cor. 3:16, 17). This picture should increase today Christianity, i.e., their consciousness of God's ever presence dwelling in their midst as they meet to worship.

The metaphor of a royal priesthood and a holy nation is also very important. the task of the priests in the Old Testament era was to ensure the application of the holy law to the lives of the people (Eze. 44:23; Hag. 2:11-13). In addition, the priests became practitioners and keepers of the cult of sacrifices and offerings, pronouncing blessings and maintaining moral, physical and social purity (Deu. 33:10; Num. 6:22-27). Apostle Paul relates his apostolic duties to those of the Old Testament priests in his epistle to the Romans, “to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. I serve the gospel of God like a priest, so that the Gentiles may become an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:16).

Ironically, most Christians today don’t know this truth, that is being priests of God to the world, and thus like people, like priest. They live in a questionable life. However, this thought or imagery should help today Christians to see more plainly the delight God has in the sacrifices of praise and good deeds that they offer to Him.

In concluding, there are many implications that can be drawn from the metaphors that the writers of both Testaments used to provide insight about what they wanted to communicate to their hearers about their need to live a life of separation from the sinful world.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the analysis of findings, the “People of God” in the Old Testament as compared to the New Testament Church. Again, the implications of findings have been dealt with, the Significance of the phrase the “People of God” in

contemporary Christianity; the Significance of the metaphors used to represent the people of God” in contemporary Christianity.

The researcher will be looking at the summary of the study, general conclusion, and recommendations in the next chapter, which is the last chapter of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Study

The study examined the concept of the people of God from the Old Testament perspective based on Exodus 8:1 and its comparison with the New Testament Church. It was seen that the people of God in the Old Testament were called into existence by God's own act of sovereign election. The phrase the people of God always designates a clear relationship. However, as it was seen, this relationship does not come through good deeds but rather it is a deliberate choice to follow God alone, so therefore supreme importance should be attached to that phrase "the people of God".

Moreover, the people of God were a people with a very special calling. They were to be a "holy nation" and a "kingdom of priests." In this wise, God intentionally called Israel to be His priests to the entire world in that they might mirror His (God) character, values, etc., and through that He might save the world and this also applies to the Church in the New Testament.

Again, it was observed that the church incorporate into itself all the true people of God, and almost all the titles or metaphors used of God's people in the Old Testament are in one place or another applied to the Church in the New Testament.

Critical Text Immanent Approach and the Historical Critical Approach were employed and an enquiry into the original Hebrew text was made in order to ascertain the original meaning of the text, that is, Exodus 8:1. Only the secondary sources were employed in gathering data for this study and that made it possible to arrive at this final outcome of the work.

Lastly, the whole study was divided into five (5) chapters with some subdivisions where necessary. It consists of general introduction, exegesis of the text on hand, general issues of the people of God, interpretation and analysis of findings and lastly summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

5.2 Conclusion

The study addressed the topic, “let my people go”: examining the concept of the people of God from the Old Testament perspective based on Exodus 8:1 and its comparison with the New Testament Church. It can be concluded that the concept “the people of God” came into being as God’s own initiative and thus His act of sovereign election.

It was seen that, the people of God in the Old Testament were considered as a “Church”, i.e., a people gathered for the purpose of worshipping God. The Septuagint translates the word for “gather” (Heb. לָקַח) in Deut. 4:10 with the Greek term ἐκκλησίαω , “to summon an assembly,” the verb that is related to the New Testament noun ἐκκλησία , “Church”.

It was found that the process whereby Christ builds the Church was a continuation of the pattern established by God, the Father, in the Old Testament whereby He called people to Himself to be worshipping assembly before Him. God declares through the prophet Isaiah his acceptance of all who come to Him in faith,

“Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely exclude me from his people.” ... And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who

hold fast to my covenant— these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” (Isaiah 56:3, 6-7)

And also the Apostle Paul in the Book of Ephesians 2:13-16 says,

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.”

It can be progressively concluded that the New Testament Christians comprise both Jews and Gentiles who had come to believe in Jesus Christ, and also the “assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven”⁹⁶ refers to the Old Testament believers. Here, too, Christians are to notice that their calling as God’s people indicates a clear relationship their day to day endeavors.

Furthermore, the term the people of God is of supreme importance and therefore Christians are called to live in total obedience to Him (God).

Finally, Christians today are advised that they should put their trust fully in God (i.e., total dependence) since they are God’s own possession or people in that they can take comfort when God calls them to action, He is not sending them by themselves. Rather, He Himself will go with them and gives them the ability to carry out their task. Christians can rest in the knowledge that their success does not depend on who they are, nor will it be hindered by their past or the obstacles ahead. Instead, they may know that their success is directly linked to their connection with the all-powerful, all-consuming self-existing One, the great “I AM”.

⁹⁶ Hebrews 12:23

5.3 Recommendations

The researcher wish to make the following recommendations based on the findings that were made in the study:

- The Church should organized conferences or seminars for biblical scholars to explain the concept of the “Church” for the church to understand.
- Proper teaching concerning the reasons why the concept the people of God came into being as God’s own initiative should be taught in our church bible study meetings and at least once in a month generally during morning or evening programmes.
- Again, ministers of the gospel must take the responsibility to teach the wrong perception against Israel and the Church and to shape their member’s mindset from thinking that, the Church in the New Testament is different from the people of God in the Old Testament.
- Christians should be taught to put their faith in God in every side of life. That the concept of the people of God which has a strong bearing on their relationship with God should not be avoided.
- Finally, Church leaders should teach their hearers to think and act collectively about their faith and duty and not just individually, especially, as we live in a very individualistic age (i.e., the state of the world today).

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