



## **WOW: Word Of the Week**

### **Treasure (a one-word summary of Exodus)**

**August 2020**

I have accepted a new challenge! Summarize the message of a book of the Bible in a single word! I have just begun; so far, I have chosen on “promise” as a key word that can be used to summarize Genesis and “treasure” as a key word for Exodus. All of the books of the Bible, but especially the longer books, present numerous possibilities. (In Exodus, other words—Yahweh, deliverance, rescue, covenant—made my short list.)

Beginning in the early chapters of Exodus, God begins to call his people by a new name – no longer children of Israel but “my people.” The Abrahamic family of promise has become a nation – God’s treasured people. As he acts on behalf of his people, calling, blessing, and consecrating them, God reveals himself. After he delivers his people from Egypt, he gives them a new identity that suggests new possibilities and new realities. The people of God will be his chosen “treasure.”

The new identity requires their consecration and that they learn to depend on Yahweh. He fully commits himself to them, expecting their commitment in return, guiding them with the covenant and the covenant code he gives them. The new identity survives through a history of rejoicing, backsliding, rejection, and renewal. The new identity is forged through the tension between faith and doubt, going forward and standing still. Along the way, many suffer, some die, and yet Israel remains God’s treasured people, even as he promised. The identity God gives is not dependent on merit, capabilities, strength, numbers, or popularity. God’s commitment to give his people a new identity is based on who God is.

Dividing the book of Exodus into smaller sections helps make it more memorable.

- 1-3, God acts on behalf of his people
- 3-4, God calls his people
- 5-13, God blesses and consecrates his people
- 13-15, God delivers his people
- 16-18, God provides for and tests his people
- 19-24, God declares a new identity for his people

- 19-24, the covenant established
- 25-31, instructions given for the tabernacle
- 31-34, the covenant renewed
- 35-40, the tabernacle constructed

The word “treasure” describes the new identity of God’s people and serves as a helpful guide for studying and understanding the book of Exodus. The word also reflects my goal, more practical and contemporary, in writing and sharing the “Word Of the Week” articles. The word should orient and give meaning for our lives, giving guidance and direction, encouragement and hope – a word for all of life.

To accentuate the contemporary application, I point to Titus 2:14 where the identity statement of Exodus 19:5 is repeated in a New Testament context. Christ’s redeeming work served to set apart and make holy and pure a people who would be identified with Christ, a people who would accept Christ’s identity, forging a new identity on the basis of the example and model of Jesus. Jesus is the example. Christians follow Jesus. Not long after Paul wrote to Titus, Peter wrote about Christian identity, giving us a longer list of identity statements based on the identity of God’s Old Testament people (see 1 Peter 2:9-10).

Understanding our identity in Christ is encouraging and challenging, but I come back again and again to one word – I am God’s “treasure.” This week – remember who you are. Remember whose you are. Remember your identity in Christ – for his own possession, his treasure, unique.