

Pendulum Swing or Two Sided Coin?

Andy Moyle,

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Sermon Audio file

Pendulum Swing

We have been looking at God's multicoloured wisdom - where God shows off his amazing diverse multicoloured wisdom to the angels and demons through what he is doing through the church.

Your life has meaning and purpose - you are part of a cosmic plan that God has!

Started with creation - in all its diversity created by God who personifies diversity in unity - Father, Son and Spirit

Then we looked at the Fall - where Adam and Eve disobeyed God and experienced shame, guilt and fear. God made a sacrifice to clothe them with the first leather outfits!

Then we began to see God's rescue plan for the whole of humanity start through God call one person - Abraham to be blessed so that through his offspring every family would get the chance to be blessed. God often chooses one to be bless many. He has chosen you too!

Now we jump forward hundreds of years - the Old Testament people of God, Israel are being formed. They have escaped slavery in Egypt and they are about to receive the ten commandments - and the rest of the Law. But before that God tells them these amazing words.

Exodus 19:5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

Condition - Obey God fully and keep my covenant.

They are about to get the law - not just 10 commandments. Jewish scholars counted 613 separate commands. They are there to show how holy God is and how much we need Jesus to save us.

King Solomon tells us in Eccl 7:20 Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous,

no one who does what is right and never sins.

Paul will teach the purpose of the law was to bring us to Christ - Gal 3:24 So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith

They had been saved by grace from slavery but still the Old Covenant was conditional on obedience first.

Ex 19:5 again IF you obey me... then out all the nations you will be my treasured possession.

Treasured Possession

If your house was to catch fire and everyone was safe and you could grab one thing, what would it be? That's your treasured possession.

The Hebrew word is *sagula* which means shut up treasure – the kind of treasure that is highly prized and kept safe. That's who the people of God are to the Lord.

Then from that identity as God's treasured possession, they are called to be a Kingdom of Priests

Kingdom of Priests

A priest is someone who mediates people to the Lord. Their job as a blessed people was to show that blessing to all the families of the earth – to carry on Abraham's call.

Mal 2:7 says for the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the Lord almighty and the people seek instruction from his mouth.

Holy Nation

God is Holy and commands his people to be holy. The command "Be holy, for I am holy" is all over the Bible!

Lev 11:45 I am the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

Two sides of a coin – the edge says treasured possession. That is their identity. One side is be a kingdom of priests. Make a difference in the nations, influence them and bless them so that they follow God. The other side is Holy nation – be holy. Don't compromise with sin.

They were meant to hold it in tension – be in the world but not of it.

But OT Israel and actually anyone without Jesus just cannot do it.

It ends up being a pendulum swing of making a mess

Instead of kingdom of priests – influencing the nations. End up with anything goes, doing the awful things the unbelievers were doing.

Then they'd swing the other way again missing the point. Holy nation – despising the other nations and being completely nationalistic. Or separating themselves.

Even today – you can see religion in general and "religious" people making a mess of the pendulum swing.

In the world and doing what they do – anything goes, chaotic lifestyles, liberalism – making Christianity wishy washy but palatable.

Swinging the other way – Christian ghetto, avoiding the world, holy huddle, legalism.

Paul warns against that in 1 Cor 5:10 "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people."

That's a great example of two sided coin – be in the world, but don't be like the world.

The call to live out being a treasured possession by being a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation is impossible in our own strength. The law was meant to point us to Jesus.

Christianity has a new covenant, a new deal – a better deal.

1 Peter 2 lays out the ideas of what treasure possession, kingdom of priests and a holy nation look like with Jesus

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

If you have become a Christian, Peter declares like Jesus you are born again – a new creation and we have been given a precious identity – chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation, God's special possession.

God has done it- he has made us the people of God and has given us with mercy.

Our destiny is not the pendulum swing of messing it up – we can live as the double sided coin – treasured possession round the edge – kingdom of priests and holy nation as the two sides, We can do it.

You may be thinking, no I can't I swing from one extreme to the other!

What's the secret sauce?

A few verses before Peter shows us

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house[a] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Living Stones

Peter is writing to people who were mostly Jewish background before finding Christ, so they would have had Old Testament understanding of what that means.

Centuries before Jesus came Ezekiel was prophesying to a wayward pendulum swinging Israel and he says this “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.”

God showed Ezekiel that without Jesus people are stony – cold and hard and unable to follow and obey Jesus. The promise he prophesied is that God would remove peoples dead stony hearts and give them a new heart. In Ezek 36 he repeats it – “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

Peter picks up the imagery of that and shows that Christians are now living stones – we have the Spirit in us, making us so alive.

Spiritual house

Then he talks about us being built together into a “spiritual house” to be a holy priesthood. A spiritual

house is literally a house of the spirit. Together we are the house where the Spirit of God dwells.

We need each other – you can't go it alone in Christian faith – the devil will pick you off straight away.

The secret sauce that makes the two-sided coin doable – is the power of the Spirit available to all of us and the church being the place where we are built together.

New Covenant is incredible.

The law of 613 commandments is impossible, nobody apart from Jesus has completely obeyed.

So, Jesus came to bring us close to God Eph 2:14-15 "For he himself is our peace who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations"

The Law was just a schoolmaster or guardian to show us we need Christ. Now grace has fully come and we find that we can be more holy than the law demanded by enjoying God's grace and walking in the power of the Spirit.

The law said don't commit adultery – grace says don't even think adulterous thoughts. Titus 2:13 tells us "grace teaches us to say no to unrighteousness"

It is walking in the Spirit that enables us to be holy and make a difference.

Gal 5:16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

It is the Spirit that gives us power to be witnesses Act 1:8

It is the Spirit who grows the fruit of holiness in us Gal 5:22

It is our experience of being living stones – filled with the Spirit and built together as God's church that means we finally get to enjoy living our new identity

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

If your life feels like a chaotic pendulum swing – God wants to turn you into a two-sided coin!

Come to Jesus

Be filled with the Spirit

Be built together