

# PEOPLE OF GOD

By

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**“Who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God.”** (I Peter 2:10)

Paul wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ; even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself...” (Eph. 1:3–5). The choosing took place before the creation for the obvious purpose of having an unblemished people in eternity. The ones chosen are those who are “adopted as sons through Jesus Christ.”

The modern error that the Jews are God’s chosen people stems from the wrong application of the promise made to Abraham. Beyond any question, the promise to Abraham, “in they seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,” has its fulfillment in Christ. To clarify this issue, Paul wrote, “Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He says not, and to seeds, as of many: but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16). Furthermore, Paul makes the application of this when he writes, “Know, therefore, that they that are of faith the same are sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, ‘in thee shall all the nations be blessed.’ So then they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham” (Gal. 3:7–9).

It is safe to say that most people today think of Christ as strictly a New Testament phenomenon, and consider the “chosen people” as a “race” limited to the Old Testament. There seems to be gross ignorance with regard to the fact that the gospel was known to Abraham and other men of faith in the Old Testament.

Consider this gospel in the Old Testament. Jesus, in rebuking the Jews, said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56). Abraham’s faith in the gospel is demonstrated in the sacrifice of Isaac: “By faith, Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son: even he to whom it was said, in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figured receive him back” (Heb. 11:17–19; Gen. 22:1–13). It was Abraham’s belief in the gospel that motivated his action and obedience to God so that the scripture says, “and Abraham believed God and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3). Hence, the scripture teaches that all who are in union with Christ are to be regarded as the seed of Abraham. “Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham...For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be **neither Jew nor Greek**, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And it you are Christ’s then are you Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise” (Gal. 3:7, 26–29).

What then of the current teachings of British Israelism, Anglo-Israelism and Premillennialism? Aren't they refuted by these truths of scripture?

Moses is another whose faith was in the gospel rather than in the "race" to which he belonged. "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward" (Heb. 11:24–26). It is clear that Moses and the other "people of God" with him were looking for a reward related to redemption through Christ, and not to a apportion of land on which they were to live temporarily. Every Christian walks in the steps of Moses when he renounces the world to follow Christ, and looks to the recompense of reward at Christ's coming.

Perhaps it is due to the marginal notes in the Scofield Bible and the many confusing theories of millennialism, that so many today view every action of a Jew as though it were a divine act of God. Following this error many Christians urge that the United States support the nation of Israel in aggressive war against the Arabs, thus using religion as a means of gross inhumanity. It is true that that God said, "And I will bless them that bless thee and curse them that curse thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). But Paul explained that the seed of Abraham are those who believed what Abraham believed, that is, the gospel. Cursing and blessing do not refer to Semitism or the fleshly relation to Abraham, but rather to the attitude toward Christ, the "seed" of Abraham. Jesus Himself made this amply clear when He said, "Everyone therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him shall I also deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32–33).

In the final analysis the people of God whom He has chosen to be His holy nation are those people who have believed in the promise of God with reference to Christ. Paul wrote that when men are separated from Christ they are alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and are strangers from the covenants of the promise "having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). But "in Christ Jesus" all are one; all are "reconciled in one body unto God through the cross;" all are "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God;" all are built upon the same foundation of the "apostles and prophets" with only one cornerstone, Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:12–21).

The Bible is a book of unity. It is too bad that many regard the New Testament as a new plan, as though God had changed His mind in the middle of history and come up with some new idea. We must realize that Jesus taught from the Old Testament scriptures — "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). The apostles preached the old Testament scriptures; in fact, that's the only scripture they had in showing that Jesus was the Christ. The arguments in Galatians, Romans and Hebrews are all based on Old Testament scriptures. The revelation to John makes use of the Old Testament records. In eternity there will not be two sets of people, one for the old Testament and one for the New, but one people of God.

The elimination of the ordinances as given by Moses changes nothing with regard to faith in Christ as the redeemer. The difference is that the Old Testament gives the history of those who looked forward to Christ's redemptive act on the cross, while the

New Testament, exclusive of the four gospels, looks back upon that act: but in both Old and New, the same essential truth is revealed:

(1) The faith is the same: that cleansing from sin is essential for man to have life in God's image, and that the cleansing is provided by God through the Lamb, which is Jesus Christ.

(2) The hope is the same: that those cleansed from sin might be resurrected from the dead and live as immortal mankind, never again to suffer temptation to sin nor the limitations of mortality. The apostle Paul, who had lived under the Old Covenant, was converted to Christ, falsely accused by the Jews and arrested by the authorities. Before King Agrippa he stated, "I stand here to be judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. And concerning his hope I am accused by the Jews. O King. Why is it judged incredible with you if God does raise the dead?" (Acts 26:6-8). Thus Paul clearly affirms that the hope of the twelve tribes was the hope of immortality by a resurrection from the dead through faith in Christ. It was and is the same hope for all who receive Christ today. It is ironical that the very ones who claimed to be heirs of the promise (Jews) were the ones who most vehemently rejected it and all who preached it. In the place of this "living hope," they have ever since advocated a materialistic Utopia, a millennial earthly reign with the core of such hope being the occupancy of the land of Palestine. Such a hope is in diametric opposition to the hope defined by Paul.

(3) The purpose is the same: that God might have man in His own image, pure and holy, thus having a "holy nation, a people for God's own possession..." in a new creation prepared for just such a people. Since this is the purpose of God from the beginning, man comes into harmony with the mind of God when he commits himself to this purpose, thus bringing glory to God in demonstrating that His purpose is the one good and inexorable purpose that stand for eternity.

Christ entered the world for one purpose: to rescue man from his condition of sin which results in total destruction, and bring him back to the purpose of God. Such has been the purpose of God all along, and all who are in harmony with this purpose are the people of God, from whatever tribe, tongue or nation they derive.

The "chosen people", therefore, are the faithful believers in Christ, the sons of Abraham by faith. God has never had but one people in the world. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is our God and Father. The Christ to whom Adam, Abraham and Moses looked for redemption is the Christ who has redeemed us. The one who led the Israelites through the wilderness is the one who leads the church today. The blood which He shed on the cross is the blood "shed from the foundation of the world", typified by animal sacrifices in the Old Testament, and the same blood which redeems ALL who will receive and inheritance in the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 5:9).

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