

ONE PEOPLE

By

Curtis Dickinson

One of the issues debated annually in almost every major denomination is whether or not Christians should try to convert Jews, and in the past few years several denominations have declared that Jews have access to God's promises without believing in the Gospel of Christ. They hold that today's Jews are God's chosen people and have a special relationship to God according to the Old Covenant.

According to this theology, God has two sets of special people – Jews and Christians.

This teaching has given rise to serious divisions, erroneous conclusions regarding prophecy, and tragic errors in politics.

A NEW COVENANT. The Old Covenant (treaty), which was the only basis for National Israel, was temporary. At the Last Supper, as Jesus blessed the cup and gave it to the apostles, He said, "...this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). With the making of a new covenant, the Old Covenant was cancelled, never to be restored (Heb. 8:13). With it went the Levitical Priesthood, all the ceremonial sacrifices and temple services, and the special significance of Jerusalem as the center of worship (Heb. 7:12, 24; 9:11; John 4:21-23). Christ was the complete and final sacrifice and the "mediator of a better covenant" (Heb. 8:6; 9:28; 10:10, 14).

Those already in covenant with God now entered into a new covenant, as promised in Jeremiah 31:31, "Behold, the days come, said Yahweh, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." It was to devout Israelites from all parts of the world that Peter preached the great Pentecost sermon, in which he declared that Jesus had ascended to David's throne to be both Lord and Christ, thus fulfilling the great prophetic hopes of the nation. In response to his sermon, 3,000 believed and were baptized and entered into a new covenant relationship with God through Christ, as prophesied (Acts 2). The Mosaic economy and all that pertained to the Old Covenant is gone, having served its purpose. The New Covenant is eternal (Heb. 8:20), and therefore will never be superseded by a restoration of the old. This covenant is the only means revealed in Scripture by which one, Jew or Gentile, may become a child of God. All God's people are in this one covenant and are one people.

NATIONAL ISRAEL REPLACED. The theory by which most evangelicals claim that National Israel and modern unbelieving Jews are still God's "chosen" is without a line of scriptural evidence. It assumes that Israel was temporarily set aside, because of her sins, but at the second coming of Christ, she will repent and God will re-establish the Levitical economy during a thousand-year period of prosperity.

According to this theory, Christ “failed” to set up His kingdom because the Jews rejected Him, so He established the church. At His second coming they will repent and accept Him, allowing Him to establish a thousand-year kingdom. In the meantime, so this pre-millennial theory goes, God is still dealing with Jew’s on a national basis, scattered over the world as they are. Proponents of the theory ignore what is readily admitted by historians, Jew and Gentile alike, that today’s Jews, for the most part, are not descendants of the twelve tribes.

But, even if they were, the fact is, National Israel and Jewish particularism were preordained to give place to the New Covenant and the universal “called out” (church) of Christ. Jeremiah clearly predicted the end of National Israel in his prophecy of a new covenant, saying, “...not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake...” (Jeremiah 31:31, 32). In Hebrews 10:1-22, the New Testament writer quotes these very words in showing that the old economy has been replaced by the new. He points out that the old law was a “shadow of the good things to come” (vs. 1). Once the type has been replaced by the real thing, it has served its purpose and is no longer in effect.

The end of National Israel was announced by Jesus: “The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matt. 21:43). It was further declared in His parables.

In the parable of the king’s invitation to his son’s marriage, those who spurned the invitation were to be destroyed and their city burned (Matt. 22:1-8). Later, Christ said to the Jews, “Behold your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:38). The King is God, the Son is Jesus, and those invited were the Jews to whom Christ preached. Their city was destroyed by the armies of Titus in 70 AD.

In another parable Jesus told of a nobleman going into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom (Luke 19). After his departure his citizens hated him and declared, “We will not that this man reign over us.” Clearly, Jesus is the nobleman, who ascended to receive His Kingship. It was the majority of the Jewish nation which refused His reign. When the nobleman returned he characterized all those citizens as his “enemies” and commanded that they should be slain. In the parables concerning the Jew’s, there was never the slightest hint that there would ever be a reversal of the sentence and re-establishment of National Israel.

Concerning National Israel Paul writes that “wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (1 Thess. 2:14-16). That wrath was expressed in 70 A.D. when the nation was destroyed in fulfillment of prophecy. Outside of the gospel of Christ, scripture offers nothing special for the Jews as a nation or as individuals. The last commission (Matt. 28:18-20) offers salvation to the Jew on the same terms that it does the Gentile.

ONE PEOPLE. Scripture speaks of *Natural* Israel and *Spiritual* Israel. It teaches that the old ethnic Israel is the “Israel after the flesh” (1 Cor. 10:18), and Paul said that it is only

“the remnant that will be saved” (Rom. 9:27). He had a desire that some of them be saved, that together with believing Gentiles they might all constitute the spiritual Israel, which he calls “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:15-16), all of which will be saved as God’s chosen people.

When the Old Covenant was replaced by the New, the way was open for Gentiles to become part of God’s commonwealth of spiritual Israel. “But now in Christ Jesus you that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and broke down the middle wall of partition...that he might create in himself of the two one new man...for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father. So then you (Gentiles) are no more strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:14-19).

God’s purpose to have a people upon the basis of faith is a reality through Christ and not through any racial, fleshly, or national connection. “For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then are you Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:26-29).

Paul listed his own credentials as a Jew and leading Pharisee, then admitted that it all was worthless and that he gladly discarded it as refuse that he might gain Christ and have hope of the resurrection (Phil. 3:7-9). For such a statement it is no wonder that the race-proud Jews hated him and sought to destroy him.

The “chosen people” myth is one of the most damaging lies of the modern world. (1) It has generated Christian support for the terrorism and genocide against Palestinians by the counterfeit state of Israel. (2) It precludes a correct interpretation of scripture. (3) It puts Jews in a position of being exempt from just criticism and stifles any discussion of their disproportionate influence. (4) It puts congressmen under pressure to bow to the Zionist lobby, lest they offend their constituents who believe the “chosen people” myth. (5) It gives a false hope to some Jews who think they can be saved without the Savior, Christ Jesus. (6) It denies Christ’s statement: “so there shall be one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16) and all other scriptures which declare the unity of God’s people. (7) It debases the work of Christ, Who died that man might be reconciled to God.

There is one body, one faith, and one hope, and only one name whereby we are saved, that of Christ Jesus the Lord. The future belongs to Him and His people. Our responsibility is clear: “That you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”, (I Peter 2:9).

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