

What About God's Chosen People?

Part I



By Philip E. Busby

Question #21 - *“Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people.”*

Because this question is very general as it comes to the subject of Jews being God's chosen people, there are three arguments I believe we can and should take the opportunity to look at. The first one is the very general argument of, is there or has there ever been a chosen people? The second one, is that nation God established through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob still the chosen people or have they been replaced by something such as the church? The third one, are the people we know today as the Jews really the same people as those God chose to establish through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? In truth, there is no way to fully separate these three. In answering one, you at least show your opinion as to the answer of the others. Thus, where I stand as a teacher of God's Word on these three should be fairly clear quite quickly. However, it is important to look at all three of these as separate arguments, and answer them as separate discussions; and that is exactly what we will attempt to do!

In covering our first argument of, is there or has there ever been a chosen people, I will not likely go after the angle many might expect me to. This is because I believe the answer to this is clearly, yes. However, more importantly, I believe the Bible makes this so clear that

to argue there is not and/or has never been a chosen people, would indicate you simply do not believe God's Word; and that is outside the scope of this writing because that's a whole other problem. In fact, I'm sure many reading this writing will be tempted to ask why, when the Bible makes this issue so clear, would we even cover this particular thought? The answer to that question is that the discussion contains some crucial facts I believe need to be covered in order to make the other discussions clear. This is because while there may not be an argument in many people's minds about was or is there a chosen people of some kind, I find the point as to why there is, is not well understood.

A point made in the words of the submission is that the premise of the question is based on the fact a “Christian friend” has been the one making the point the Jews were not God's chosen people, and this is where we want to start. To be clear, I am not trying to put anyone in one category or another, for only God can truly do that; and I hope all those reading this understand one of the great things about the ministry God has called me to do is that I get to write what God directs me to without worrying whom I might offend. I believe all ministers should do this, but very often they do not because they are too close to the people they are talking to. Many of the questions I write answers to come from very anonymous sources, and even when they do not, I don't really write from a perspective of personally answering any of these questions. Instead, I write with the understanding that what I say should be clear Biblical teaching, and something that must go out as teaching for all who read it, not just the question submitter. This means I write in the spirit of what Paul talked about in I Corinthians 2:2, which is that I know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I say all this because I will be very critical of Christians and Christianity in this writing, but I want people to be clear it is the theology not any individual I am talking about. We will discuss some prominent “Christian” viewpoints out there, but one of the main points of this article will be that each individual must choose for themselves where they stand on all these issues.

It has been said of both Christians and Jews that we are “People of the Book.” While many religions have a book(s) they consider sacred or foundational to their belief, it is truer of no other people than Christians and Jews that we should be people who base what we believe and how we live on the words of God. How do we find these words? Well, anyone, anywhere, can find God's words through their direct relationship with God, which is Biblically called “faith.” We know this because we are told in the Bible, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and

hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17 This means that somewhere along the line we had to hear God's Word in order to obtain even a beginning measure of faith. What does this tell us? Two very important things: First, it tells us we did not obtain faith on our own, but it is something God granted us by being willing to speak to us first. (Ps. 139:7-16, Rom. 5:6-8) The second fact it shows us is just how immensely important the Word of God is! Now, what we read in II Peter 3:9 is that it is not God's will that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Putting this together, we should clearly understand that God speaks to humans and wants to have an eternal relationship with each and every human who has, and ever will live! Thus, from the beginning of it all, God has spoken to individuals. How do we know this? Because the Word of God has not always existed in a written form, so to believe God does not speak to people directly is to believe God did not desire to save anyone until He gave His written Word among men!

This may seem to some an obvious point, but it is one that we do not apply well. This is shown in no greater way than the arguments this question is addressing. There is, in fact, an argument out there which states God never did establish a chosen people. The argument is that the entire idea of a chosen people was, at best, a misunderstanding on the part of certain individuals who then elevated themselves. As I said, this is to believe almost everything in what Christians call the Old Testament is incorrect and/or the story of some of the most misguided people that ever lived! As many will shake their head at such an argument and the poor ignorant people who believe it, what they do not realize is many so-called Christian philosophies are just as absurd, which is something I hope one will see as we go on.

Much of the trouble in arguments about the issue of God's chosen people stems from the fact that instead of looking at the subject of God establishing a chosen people from the standpoint of evangelism, which would go hand in hand with the points we covered above, we look at this subject as exclusion. One should ask one's self, how can it be true that God wants everyone to come to repentance if He is always creating these clubs of exclusion? The obvious answer to some people is simply that He never did establish a chosen people, and the belief that whole teaching is a fallacy. Well, if you think looking at almost the entire Old Testament, and the Jewish nation specifically, is nothing but a story of misguided people, sounds outlandish, we should stop and look at the philosophy many Christians believe. One of the most widely held of these beliefs is that God replaced one group (Israel) with a new group (the

church). Especially when it comes to the idea of throwing out most of the Bible, the two theologies are not really as dissimilar as many might think!

Where we so often go wrong and certainly where we get into a lot of bickering about the chosen people subject is actually not so complicated. In truth, it comes from a simple but very large mistake. The mistake we make is we are continually connecting the message of salvation to the idea of a chosen people, and this is where the real fallacy lies! It would be wrong to say one has nothing to do with the other, but one (a chosen people in the here and now) is meant to lead to the other (salvation), and not the other way around. Simply put, what defines us as true believers in God is not what group we are, or are not, a part of in the here and now, but our faith! This is why we should all be people of God's Word. It is not man's words or the words of a doctrine which will save us. It is not the following of a law, the execution of sacraments, or anything of the like that will save us. It is our direct relationship with God Himself!

Of course, there is coming a specific judgment day in which God will separate humans into two distinct groups. Jesus refers to this as the separation of the sheep from the goats. (Matt. 25:31-46) However, the reason we are told so specifically about Judgment Day is that it will be a different day from the days we have been living in the here and now. This is one of the main reasons Revelation makes it clear this day will not take place until the here and now is completely gone and over with! (Rev. 20:11-21:8) This division of souls will also take place at a point when there is no changing your mind, because where the two groups go from there is eternal, not temporal as our world is now. We need to be clear on the fact, creating exclusive groups of people to designate who is saved, or saving people by bringing them into a specific group is not what the Bible shows us God is doing here. Nor is it what Judgment Day is about for that matter. On Judgment Day the die will truly be cast for each individual, based on what they chose for themselves while in the here and now!

Thus, to gain an appropriate understanding of why God established a chosen people, we must follow the Biblical fact that God is not willing any should perish on that day. God would rather see all choose to come to repentance while they are here: which is turning from the sinful things of this world, desiring God and His righteousness instead. However, the other key Biblical fact we must add to our understanding is that God is not going to force anyone to choose repentance, nor make them live here until they choose it, no matter what group

or bloodline they are part of. The opening story of human existence and the fact man even had the chance to eat from a tree - which God had instructed them not to because it would bring death - placed right there in the very garden God had placed man, proves this point. (Gen. 2:8-17) In this light, we clearly see any design in God's plan for a chosen people is not to set some window or framework for who is and who is not eligible for salvation. Nor is it a way of designating who is and who is not saved. Individual's choices will make the difference for every individual. Thus, we should see that God choosing a particular people is for a particular reason, and it is an evangelistic reason based on the fact repentance leads to salvation through faith, which is obtained by the hearing of God's Word!

This is what brings us to that all important verse in Romans chapter 2 where Paul asks, what benefit is there in being of God's chosen people? The answer is that unto them is committed the oracles of God! When Paul talks about the oracles, it is important to remember he is not talking about the Bible as we know it today. To be clear, he is not referring to a book or collection of scrolls containing Old and New Testaments. He is talking only about the Hebrew Bible or, again, what Christians know as the Old Testament; and even more specifically he is talking about the Torah or Law, which is just the first five books of the Old Testament. Paul was pointing out that the chosen nation is special because they are the holders of the written Words of God. Again, this is not the only way to hear the Words of God, because many heard His voice long before there was a written Word. However, in a fleshly-minded world, a tangible Word is of great value! Aside from people themselves, the most precious tangible thing on this planet is the written Words of God; and because this is true, there was a people chosen by God to hold It and be Its primary caretakers and exemplifiers! This was not so the Bible could be exclusive, but so it would always be available and never just be lost in the history of men as some old archaic history, religious, or novel writing. This is why both Jews and non-Jews who are true believers in God should be people of the Book. The chosen people's primary work is to preserve this Book and live it, so those who are not of the nation may see it, recognize what it is, obtain it, and grow in their faith through It! This is where we have things turned around backward in our heads as Christians, and we end up approaching, and thus debating the issue of a chosen people from a completely wrong viewpoint.

Many Christians have approached and still do approach the Bible from an Old versus New Testament

stance, but also from the wrong side of things. They look at things from a very religious, if not mysterious viewpoint. The Catholic church has even rejected the title, People of the Book, on the basis that church doctrine and ordinances are what people should really be about. This clarifies my point for what I mean by saying people look at Old versus New is that so many people see what God did in the Old Testament as separated from the New. They come at it from the wrong side, because they have the thought that what God did in the New is better or more relevant because it is "New." This is totally wrong, because whether Jew or non-Jew, true believers should be people of the Torah first and foremost. This is because without it there is no true and certainly no in-depth understanding of the rest of what we call the Bible!

Now, there are many who would quickly stand up and say the attitude I just described about the New being more relevant is not true about them or their teaching because they do see the "foundation" of the New in the Old, or they will say they see and teach "The Jewish roots of Christianity." The second statement is the most telling in that people use two key words: "roots" and "Christianity." In truth, this is a good description of many who believe they are better off because they do not so much throw out the Old Testament as others do. It's true they may not throw out the Old as wrong or irrelevant, but they still see the Bible entirely wrong in that they look at the Old Testament as a thing that "was," and the New Testament as the thing that "is." In the end, there ends up being very little difference!

What almost all Christian religious theology boils down to, and at the heart of the belief, is the thought God started in a place and with a plan that then had to be changed or did change over the centuries of human history. Now, I will not dispute there have been changes in what we see throughout the Word of God. However, the important thing to understand about what we see is that God was not and is not changing, nor is His plan! God is following His plan through it all. What we see changing is due to the fact God's plan was, from the beginning, one that included a free will for man. This means we see man exercising that free will and creating the course we have followed. The problem is that this course has taken man further and further away from God's desire. Because God did not set us up for failure, God started us out with what was best for us if we were willing to follow His desire for our existence. The steps we see as change that God has taken at particular times are due to the fact God's plan was designed to make the adjustments from what is best for us under ideal circum-

stances, to what is best for us in the unrighteous circumstances man has chosen.

This, again, is a truth we see right off as man took of the fruit God told them not to; and because of what it brought into their lives, man was driven from The Tree of Life. What many lose sight of is that in man doing what he has done, man has never forced God to do anything God was not prepared to do from the foundation of the world. It is a truth that God had to go in one direction instead of another because man chose one direction instead of another, but neither of these directions were something God had to figure out as He went along. God told Adam that in the day they ate of the fruit He told them not to, they would surely die; and being separated from the source of the flesh's immortality - The Tree of Life - was exactly what happened when they did it. Man has disappointed God in that man continues to choose the unrighteous path in life which just keeps making things in the here and now harder; but this was from the beginning, according to God's plan, man's choice to make!

Talking about man's free will takes us back to the discussion which may clarify the subject better, and that is the subject of salvation. When we talk about people seeing or believing in the Jewish roots of Christianity, or the Old Testament being a foundation to the New, what we are more often than not talking about is the base idea that God has changed His plan of salvation for man. Thus, we say the salvation plan that we call Christianity is rooted in the events of the Old Testament, but still something new or different which grew forth as God changed the mode of salvation. This is a most basic fault in the thinking of those who claim to be Christian. The concept of a Christian is to say Jesus is the only way; and let me be very clear on what I say next: this is totally true. However, what Christians do not understand is that this has always been true!

Revelation 13:8 describes Jesus as The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and John chapter 1 makes it clear Jesus is The Word and was not only with God from the very beginning but was/is God! This is all part of what we just discussed about God being prepared for whatever path man chose. Not absorbing this simple fact is a major tripping point for many Christians. They believe what Christianity teaches is new as apposed to old. In doing this, Christians then split into two camps, both of which are fallacies! Some believe the thought that God replaced that which was old with that which is new. Others believe God built what is new on or out of what is old. It's true, the second thought has some supe-

rior elements to the first. To believe God replaced what is old with that which is new is so far off base, it opens the door to many things that have plagued the Christian "Church" for centuries. To say the old is replaced is to disregard the old and open the door for whatever new theology you believe you can come up with by teaching (or twisting) the words of the New Testament.

This is what created the beast we see in Revelation which has the appearance of a lamb but speaks with the voice of a dragon. (Rev. 13:11) A religion formed which calls itself by the same name given to the apostles very early on - "Christian." It claims to be the holder of the truth the apostles taught and the administrator of how to interpret and apply those truths to everyday life as the years go by. If the New Testament is not anchored in the Old, this seems plausible; and thus, we have a marquee example of this religion in the organization that calls itself the Universal Christian Church, or Catholic. This organization believes what I just described very unequivocally. In its history is even torture and bloodshed as it fought those who were truly attempting to follow God, or just form their own church outside the Catholic "authority." However, before many of us take comfort in pointing fingers at the Catholic church for all its woes, we should realize that outside that church is still those who are much the same, just within their own organizations and groups. We can be violent or we can be passive, but what is important is that we be Biblical not organizational, individual not collective. God will not save an organization. Nor should people feel secure being in one group over another as a way to save their soul. We will all stand before God for the sins we have done, and no church, title, or grouping will matter on that day.

Why is this true? Because all have sinned and come short of God's Glory. (Rom. 3:23) This is true no matter what group you are or have been a part of. Thus, only our faith - which is our personal relationship with God - will make a difference while standing before God for judgment! (Eph. 2:8-9) While finding a church which teaches truth can help us with our walk in faith, and other true believers can as well, it is also true that we can be led away from faith if we are part of something that is wrong. How do we know the difference? By knowing the Word of God for ourselves. While on the subject of how personal our walk with God is and how much we should be spending time looking at our own lives instead of being glad we are not as "wrong" as others, let me point out a real problem we can have. People often do not have the right understanding about God's chosen people because they contain the same faulty thinking the Jewish

religious leadership had at the time of Jesus' earthly appearing!

Far too much we put our hope in the merit of believing something and being part of something such as a group. In doing this, we begin to think of our ability to develop doctrine and theology as higher than our faith, which in truth is a basic flaw God gave us a tangible written Word in order to combat. We tend to think, a whole group of people can't all be wrong, but they can and often are! At its best, believing there is merit in simply believing something, especially if many others subscribe to it, is a death sentence for an individual to have. However, what can happen when we truly take it to heart is a point clearly in the story of the Gospels, which is very much passed over or never seen at all.

Jesus was not crucified because the leadership completely refused to consider He was The Messiah. Jesus was killed because He was not The Messiah they expected. They could not deny He was unmistakably more than the average prophet. (Matt. 12:22-30) In the third chapter of the Gospel of John, one of these leaders named Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night so as not to be seen by the others. Nicodemus begins his conversation with Jesus by saying, "...Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Nicodemus does not go so far as to admit Jesus is The Messiah, but this does not really dampen what he did say. Nicodemus says they know Jesus is sent from God, because there is just no other explanation for it. This, of course, is the first and crucial step in recognizing Jesus as The Messiah. If you do not believe someone is from God, you certainly should not believe that person is The Messiah; and the entire reason for Nicodemus to admit this point is to, at the very least, indicate the question was on the table. The debate of whether He is from God or not was actually settled; and because this was true, Nicodemus wanted further information about Jesus no matter how unpopular it was.

The ultimate problem they had with Jesus is made clearer when one understands, the Jewish religion does not believe it is necessary, if even possible, for The Messiah to be God. (John 10:22-33) Jesus was not only clearly from God, but spoke with the authority of God. Because of what they believed, this was a big problem for them! (Mark 2:1-10, John 5) In fact, when looking at Jesus' trial before these religious leaders, we see that idea is what wraps up the matter of them having cause to take Jesus to the secular authority for capital punishment. In Mark 14:61-64 Jesus was asked by the High Priest,

"...Art thou the Christ, the son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Upon hearing this, the High Priest rent his clothes and asked, "What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death." You see, the Apostles were not men who just accepted the fact Jesus was The Messiah the world had been waiting for, but that The Messiah was actually God. (Matt. 16:13-17, 22:41-46) This was/is not a new truth, but exactly the knowledge Abraham had, and showed when he told his son Isaac, God Himself would be The Lamb. (Gen. 22:7-8) This is why we see verses in the New Testament such as Philippians 2:6-11 where Paul explains that Jesus, "...thought it not robbery to be equal with God:..." yet Jesus took on the form of a man, and allowed Himself to be crucified.

Because the Jewish religious theology said The Messiah would not be God, in spite of the fact they knew very good and well Jesus was from God, when Jesus thought it not robbery, they believed it was their right, if not their duty, to dispose of Him, if for no other reason than to protect the people from going after a Messiah Who did not line up with what their religion believed and had taught them! This is amazing stuff, but the church which now calls itself the Christian church is guilty of nothing less than this on so many points!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

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