

What About God's Chosen People?

Part III



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."*

In our last segment, our focus shifted from the discussion of the fact God did establish a chosen people, more to why He did. We discussed how the weakness of language should not confuse us about the fact God has, does, and will choose people from all the world to be His people; and thus, for salvation. However, there is still a chosen people who are probably better described as God's chosen nation. We also began to look at why this chosen nation must still be important and still a chosen people as a nation, on the basis of facts that show us the reasons something like the church could not replace them. In this segment, we want to pick up on that discussion and look at a few more points that strengthen this truth.

Simply put, the church could not replace the chosen nation because it was and is not the churches' calling, and this is shown to us not only in the fact the Law was not an embedded part of any other culture's life and heritage as it was/is Israel's. It is also good to look at basic facts such as, Israel was organized in a way which meant not just any Israelite could carry out much of the ceremony the Law required. A big part of the key to carrying out the full laws of ceremonial practice was

restricted specifically to one tribe (the Levites), and even more so to one family out of that tribe (Aaron's house). These specific individuals would serve as the priests and the High Priest needed for the temple to function. This shows us, God did not even entrust His ceremonial law to an entire nation of people, but very much to a specific family, who in turn shows us just how difficult this was to maintain.

Right from the start, the family of Aaron showed that if they did not perform the ceremonies correctly, and more importantly with a pure heart, they would pay with their lives. (Lev. 10:1-7) You see, it is no small thing to stand before the presence of God so directly as the priests needed to do, especially the High Priest! Men had to be prepared to do so with a heart clean of the things of this world, and knowledge of the Law and its ordinances that far exceeded the knowledge a general population of even a specifically chosen nation would maintain. If we took the time to cover even more specific history, which the Bible tells us about Israel, we would see the fact God's direct presence at the tabernacle and temple was rarely seen through the course of the tabernacle/temple(s)' existence with the directness and potency we see at the beginning of the Law's establishment. This is because it was so hard for men to maintain the righteousness and holiness needed for God to be there so directly without God's Holiness consuming them. Thus, God's presence couldn't continually be there in the way He desired and started out with; or the system would not even have existed as much as it did, at least in the way it was able to, nor would it have lasted as long as it did!

There is also the very pointed fact to look at here, which is: what we see in the story of God's chosen nation is that even with God making His ordinances part of their cultural heritage, Israel as a whole had a very difficult time not straying off course over and over. They had been warned by God that they were not to take on the cultural and religious beliefs of the nations that surrounded them. However, they fell to this temptation; and at times failing so badly they even forgot there was a specific Law they, as a nation, were to be following. (II Kin. 22) Eventually, forsaking God's Laws caused the nation to suffer the severe blow of captivity in foreign lands. Only a remnant of Israel was to be left on the land God gave them. (II Chron. 30, Isa. 1:5-9) All these facts about how Israel had such a hard time, even after all God had given them in order to do His work on this earth, again shows us it would be impossible for a random group of people from all cultures around the world to be given the responsibility of performing the ceremonial law!

Moving along with these thoughts in mind, we should understand that if following these laws were, what was necessary for salvation, even before the time of Christ, there would have been many souls lost, not just because they themselves failed to follow this law and all its specifics, but because many would have been unfortunate enough to live at a time when Israel itself was not functioning at a level that gave them the opportunity to see what they needed in their lives, or do in order to find salvation! In the end, it all comes back to the simple fact it was never God's intent to trap mankind, even His chosen nation, into this kind of failure; but it was God's intent to show all of us, through His chosen nation, just how much we all need a Saviour that only God Himself could/can provide!

Because this is true, God would not go from using Israel to show us this, to sending Christ in order to bind any other part of, or group in, the world into such a format. Thus, the demonstrative laws, no matter the current circumstances, are still the responsibility of God's chosen nation, not some organization such as the church or any other group of people. Now, this is the argument many would use to say Christ changed everything when He came to this earth, but that is foolish, especially in light of Jesus' own words when He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Matthew 5:17-18 Believing Jesus changed everything and did away with the Law, even for Israel, or transferred what God then wanted done, to a random group across the world called the church, is just not the right way to see it! The world still needs a focal point in order to know that what we are looking for from God, to take place on this earth, is of God, when and as it takes place. Thus, just as the wise men came to worship The King of the Jews at the time of Christ's birth, because they knew it meant something special for Jesus, a Jew, to be born, so too, we need to look not to some organization, church, ministry, minister, etc. to know something special is coming about, but to the people God designated centuries ago to be the holders of His oracles!

This point is often misunderstood because people get caught up on things such as the idea that not long after Jesus' first appearing, the temple was destroyed and much of the demonstrative law halted due to this and other factors. People will say this happened or was allowed to happen because the laws of sacrifice,

and the like, were replaced by Jesus when He died on the cross and rose from the dead. Again, this is a foolish way to look at it. First, we need to look at the fact the time after Christ, when the temple was destroyed, was not the first time the Law was unable to be carried out in full. Not just because Israel at times failed to carry it out - as we discussed before - but also because this was not the first time the temple had literally been destroyed. (II Chron. 36:16-20) The point is simply, Israel showed us and still shows us today that in a world falling ever deeper into sin, it becomes more and more difficult to maintain the things of God, especially on the scale the Law God gave to Israel requires.

This is why it took so long to see the mobile tabernacle Israel started with in the wilderness, replaced by a more permanent structure in the place God chose to set His name on this earth, which was and is Jerusalem. (Deut. 12:5-7, I Kin. 8:26-30) It is also why, after the destruction of the first temple, God worked to use those of His chosen nation who would follow Him, to eventually return to the land of promise and rebuild the temple. This was by no means an easy task, as the remnant who were suppose to stay on the land, even during the time of the captivity, had, for the most part, chosen to abandon it. (Jer. 41:1-43:7) This left room for other people, not of God's nation, to take possession of much of the land and believe it was theirs, and a place Israel did not belong. Then there was the problem, due in no small part to that fact, the first group God sent back from the captivity did not act on the work with their whole hearts and complete the task of building the new temple, much less reestablish the Law. It was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain enough people dedicated to the oracles of God to maintain the ceremonial law. God would then have to send a fresh group of His people back from the captivity to jump-start the process and get it back to a reasonable working state! (Ezra & Neh.)

Beyond these facts, is the fact that even after reestablishment of much of the Law, the political circumstances would continue to morph and change, as they always do among men. This affected the performance of the Law over and over, and through the centuries not only was this second temple essentially replaced by what I believe should be called the third temple, but this third iteration of the temple was not even built under the direction of God's chosen nation as much as it was built as a political statement by the political leaders of the day, for their own political purposes! This is the temple that would be standing at

the time of The Messiah's coming, and is the one people like to point to as being destroyed not long thereafter.

To top all this off, there is the fact we have discussed in this series already, which is, by the time The Messiah is sent to the nation of Israel, the ruling religious views had become so distorted that they put the very Messiah, which all true believers had been waiting for, to death. What does this show us? Simply that as God gave man, including His specifically chosen nation, every opportunity to show they could listen to God's voice and get things right on this earth without God using forceful means to administer righteousness, it just became harder and harder, in a world of sinful men, to maintain anything of the things of God. This was true even for one people, on one spot on this planet. The growing problem was, in order for all the world to have the opportunity to see Jesus was The True Messiah we should all have been and still should be looking for, people needed to see Him come under the right circumstances; through the right people; to the right place; in order to fulfill the prophecies that had been laid out centuries in advance for the purpose of us being able to recognize Who and why The Messiah was and is important to the entire world!

Because God gave man a free will, God's righteousness demanded He give us the chance to get it right. However, the above facts show us God could not wait until it became impossible for The Messiah to show Himself to and through Israel, on their land of promise, in the prophesied city of Jerusalem, and with the temple still in place. Thus, the right way to view the circumstances of the temple being destroyed not long after Christ's first appearing is not the traditional view of the Christian religion, which again is that Jesus' sacrifice ended the need for the temple and the ordinances of the Law God gave to Israel, but just the opposite was/is true. To put it as simply as I can, one should understand - Jesus did not come to put an end to the temple sacrifices; Jesus came because the temple sacrifices were going to come to an end!

All this is why talking about the difference between truly being of the chosen nation and being a Christian is really not comparing things that belong in the same category. A member of God's chosen nation is obligated to follow the Law because it was/is their God-given responsibility. This remains true even if, or maybe I should say especially if, a Jew finds and accepts Jesus as The Messiah. Where as being a Christian, whether you're a Jew or non-Jew, is to accept everything

in your life as centered around not just the idea the promised Messiah would come, but the understanding that the man Jesus Christ was/is The Messiah those who truly had/have faith knew God would provide, because He is The One God prophesied in His Written Word would come through the chosen nation, which God used His Word to establish!

Knowing God has, in fact, provided Himself as a lamb slain for our sins is truly good news, because Israel has shown us there is no hope in a written law saving us. This is largely because it shows how far we as humans fall short of God's glory in spite of our best efforts to follow something such as a written law. No human of the line of Adam, nor group of humans, can even be depended on to maintain what we need for the ceremonies to be what saves us even if they could, and God does not want to see any perish because the Law was/is too weak to save us. God used and is still using Israel to demonstrate this point so we could/can all learn from it.

That's the beauty of what true Christianity should be teaching us! Again, there might not be a representative temple with all its representative ceremonies, and there has not been for a very long time now. However, there is still the real thing those things were, and will be, only meant to represent in the first place. This is why Jesus talked about how He wanted to live inside of us. It does not matter if you are of the chosen nation or not, the real temple is individual humans who desire, allow, and prepare their lives for God to live inside of them. Jesus talked about leaving so The Holy Ghost could come. This was not just so we would be comforted, but so this very thing could happen. (John 16:6-8) Jesus' job was to come in human flesh; but as John the Baptist said of Jesus, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:" Matthew 3:11 The Holy Ghost needed to come so we could have Him as the light shining in our lives, as the lights of the temple menorah represent in the Holy place, (Ex. 27:20-21, John 14:15-17) and teaching us as individuals those things the Law shows us we need, but which written ordinances could never accomplish! There may not, for the time being, be a temple with its representative sacrifices to show us our need for these things; but in spite of man's weaknesses, the real thing is something still available, and God's Word still shows us the representative law through its words if one is only willing to study it. (Ps. 119:11) Paul

talks about the real things in Romans 12:1 when he beseeches us to present our bodies a living sacrifice. Our bodies are how we function in this physical world, but the desires of the flesh are not the things of God. (Rom. 8:1-8) Paul tells us our bodies should not be used to provide the things it desires, but that it's our reasonable service to God that we suppress the flesh's desires and use it as an instrument of righteousness!

Jesus also talked about knowing those who truly serve God, by the fruits in their life, but these fruits are not fruits of the flesh. These fruits are fruits produced by allowing The Holy Ghost to mold our spirit into God's likeness. Then our spirit will produce fruits such as Paul describes, which are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Gal. 5:22-23) As our spirit produces these fruits, it must then be able to translate them out through the actions of our flesh for a witness to this world, just as the Law was meant to do. This is why we must present our bodies a living sacrifice. It's not enough to just seek to develop these fruits inside of us, but while alive we sacrifice our flesh to the work of God and His righteousness! This is the truth the Law could only represent. Righteousness is not about following a written law, because it can't accomplish enough. True righteousness is not about us being able to redeem ourselves when we fail, because only faith in God can do that. True righteousness is about doing the work of God in and through our lives! This is why we are told faith without works is dead. (James 2:20) True righteousness is about us striving to make the right choices in how we handle ourselves in every situation and in every moment of our lives. This can only be truly accomplished in the Jew or non-Jew alike by the real things being inside us, not just the representative things; and the real thing is God living in our hearts in the way God represents in the Law by creating the temple as His physical dwelling place on this earth.

Also, we should understand, just as the Law set up a specific priesthood to carry out full-time ministry at the temple for the nation of Israel, among all people, God set up those, even who are not of the chosen nation, who are specifically called into full-time ministry. (Eph. 4:8-15) However, ministry, just like the ordinances of the Law, is also not, even for those in full-time ministry, the truth of their individual faith! No one should seek to be in ministry full time above their individual faith. We should all seek the righteousness of God and His true kingdom first and foremost, no matter who we are or what our physical labor here is. (Matt. 6:3) Allowing

God to live in us and flow through us on an everyday basis is something those even in ministry must seek first or they will fail; and just as with the Law, being in the ministry is not what is going to save anyone. Learning what the true ministry is attempting to lead us to and living in that faith as everyday people doing everyday things, growing in our righteous abilities to do so has, is, and will continue to be the real point of any law, ministry, etc.!

All this makes it ridiculous to believe, and is a main point in why it does not mean, the Law has passed away. Just as God calls individuals into ministry work, Israel as a chosen nation still has a job to do! This is confirmed to us in the fact Jesus told us when He left this earth He would return, (Matt. 24:30, Acts 1:9-11) and just as with His first coming, where do we look to for His return? How do we know we are really seeing the things of God and not just the things of men? By looking to the same place God established centuries ago for all those with true faith to look to - His chosen nation! (Zech. 14:1-4)

Without making this an entire point of our discussion here, let me just point out this is a main reason so much of what calls itself the church falsely teaches there will be the physical appearance of a false christ to establish a world empire! These kinds of teaching show us why it is such a fallacy to say God never had a chosen nation, or to think something like the church could replace it. However, it also brings us to the discussion of our third question, which is, are the people we know today as the Jews really the same people as those God chose to establish through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as His chosen nation? I will start this by simply saying yes! The facts both Biblical and historical show us clearly this is true, and while it would take a volume of books to cover them all, I will attempt to lay out the basics of why we know this is true.

To begin with is the simple fact Israel, and by Israel I refer here to those we generally call Jews, are and have been for a few decades now, according to prophecy, once again returning to their land in great numbers. (Amos 9:8-15) Now, it is not to say God is responsible for the violence of evil men; but He is responsible for opening the gateway that has created the circumstances we now see, which uses the persecution of God's chosen nation to drive them back to their land. For many centuries, Jews have been persecuted in foreign lands; but now when this kind of persecution takes place, the land of Israel is the destination sought

by Jews. One of the greatest and beginning examples of this is that of the Holocaust carried out by the Nazis, which was not just about a dislike for Jews but an attempt to exterminate their entire race!

During this time, many Jews were caught off-guard and with no place to go. During most of the Holocaust there was resistance and downright refusal by many of the nations of the world to even allow Jews to immigrate to their countries in order to escape what was certain death for many Jewish people and whole communities. This was true of most all the countries who were fighting the Nazis as their mortal enemies, and places such as the United States were no exception. Even as there became an international consensus among the "peace loving" nations to establish a national homeland for the Jewish people in their ancient land, there are historical facts about literally boat loads of Jews fleeing the Holocaust, destined to the land of Israel, being turned back by the very nation (Britain) mandated to bring this homeland for the Jews into reality.

What a study of history teaches us is the Jewish people had to rise up and make it a reality for themselves. This was done again as it had been millenniums before when God brought Israel out of Egypt. The Jews had to fight, not just against the people who then claimed the land as their own and refused (to this day) to even share it with the Jewish people, but again they had to fight the very people of the nations who had agreed to establish this homeland. It was in May of 1945, that Nazi Germany collapsed, the SS guards fled, and the death camps which were carrying out the Holocaust ceased to exist. However, even by August, United States special envoy Earl Harrison made public a report to U.S. President Truman on the treatment of Jewish displaced persons in Germany. The point here is, even following World War II, several hundred thousand Jewish survivors were unable or unwilling to return to what, up until then, they had considered their home countries!

Harrison's report also contained a strong indictment of Allied military policies, underscoring the plight of the Jews, yet the world for the most part stood back and did nothing! Thus, the Jews determined to fight for their right to the land God had promised them, eventually made Britain's control over the land of Israel increasingly difficult, which was necessary even in the years following World War II. The Jews were forced to cause severe damage to British morale by attacking British installations and forces that were preventing

Jews from coming to Israel. By the hand of God, even the world's public opinion eventually turned against Britain as a result of the British policy of preventing Holocaust survivors from reaching Israel, and there became increasing opposition to Britain's continued presence in Israel among Britain's own public opinion!

Finally, on November 29, of 1947, The General Assembly of the United Nations decided with a majority of 33 in favor, 13 against, 10 abstaining, and 1 absent to divide what they called "Palestine" into two states. One would be for the Jewish people, and one for the Arab population. Jews would celebrate in the streets, but the Arabs rejected the plan with violence against the Jews. The next day, the Arab High Committee, which represented the surrounding Arab states, declared war on Israel. However, again by the hand of God, a group of determined Jews, willing to give their lives for their land, defended the land of Israel and its people, both Jewish and Arab, from the neighboring states which attacked! The Jewish state won the War for Independence, and on May 14, of 1948, David Ben-Gurion, who was the leader of the Jews in Israel, announced the establishment of the State of Israel in Tel Aviv and declared that Jewish immigration into the new state would be unrestricted! Between 1948 and 1951, almost 700,000 Jews immigrated to Israel, including more than two-thirds of the Jewish displaced persons from Europe.

It has often been my thought that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said it best when he said in June of 2009, "The right of the Jewish people to a state in the Land of Israel does not derive from the catastrophes that have plagued our people. There are those who say that if the Holocaust had not occurred, the State of Israel would never have been established. But I say that if the State of Israel had been established earlier, the Holocaust would not have occurred."

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

