

What About God's Chosen People?

Part XII



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, we came down to talking about what a force the Greeks became as they took over the empire, not just in the aspect of power, but in culture. While the Greeks made very quick and sudden changes to the world through the work of Alexander the Great, his death brought what might seem like a weakness in the one world government idea. However, what it revealed was that centralized government did not turn out to be such a driving force behind unifying the world as culture! This is an interesting point because there are hundreds of years between the Tower of Babel incident that caused man to separate one from another, and that had everything to do with why various cultures exist. While the Assyrians seemed to have a view of diverse cultures being a problem with uniting the world, they believed the way to combat this issue was through forcefully intermingling people to destroy the uniqueness of various cultures. When this backfired on that empire and the Babylonians took power, they chose total force and centralization of government as the solution.

In fairness, the Babylonians found that for them force worked quite well, but it still angered those they

ruled over as well as those they threatened; and when God opened the door of opportunity, the Medes and Persians came sweeping in. As we have discussed, this empire tried to embrace diverse cultures instead of forcing them out, but they still wanted to centralize power over the world. This angered the Greeks and led to the Medes and Persians' demise. It would sound downright ignorant to say the Greeks did not believe in force; but Alexander, being the most successful in using force on a military level since the Babylonians, either believed in converting culture through the simple spread of the Greek culture, or he just wanted to share what he believed to be the superior and/or helpful culture of the Greeks across the world. One way or another, this led to a revolution that happened, in many ways, right under the noses of the factions who fought for control of the Greek empire following Alexander's death.

As these Greek kings fought between themselves for governing power over territory, the common man, who they seemed to pay little attention to, was becoming enamored with the Greek culture itself. Some might argue this is not how it happened because these kings were very into the Greek way of doing things. However, their actions were more in the simple arrogance that most of the empires had, which was that their culture was simply the best and anyone with half a brain would see it. It was not actually until a time into their rule that anyone seemed to truly pay attention to the fact people were responding to the idea Greek culture was an attractive thing, and certain rulers realized what an advantage in maintaining an empire they had right in front of them!

Why does all this matter to our study of the Jews being God's chosen nation? Simply put, for all the work people like Ezra and Nehemiah did to stress the importance to the Jews that they needed to be a peculiar people, the Jews were by no means immune to the Greek allure! We have some, and will talk more as we go, about the fact certain Greek rulers did make forceful attempts to cause their culture to be the only culture. However, it is very important we be clear on the fact that long before any Greek power attempted to force the Jews to abandon the Laws of God, there were already those in the nation who believed this was the way to go! The truth we must keep in mind is that the Greeks had the success they had at pinning down (or believing they could) those of the chosen nation who refused to totally give up God's Laws for Greek culture, because the Greeks had support for the base idea of making all the world Greek among people living all throughout their empire, including the Jews!

This is where our study turns to a term that is

commonly used to refer to the process of making the world Greek, and that term is "Hellenization." Many may be familiar with this term while others may not. However, if one asks why understanding this term is good for this study, it is because the term has roots which go all the way back to the Greeks' beginnings as a people, and going over the basics of the story should give a good perspective on why there were those among the Jews who believed the Greeks' ways could be integrated into, if not simply replace, the Word of God!

Now, I hate to turn back the clock on our study, but we have to return again, at least for a minute, to the Tower of Babel and talk about a subject we've talked about before. I've always thought that outside the fact we have so much prophecy in our day coming to pass before our very eyes, one of the biggest things that proves the Bible is true is that all cultures tell the story of the flood, and that event was followed very quickly by the confounding and the separation of people across the earth. It is only logical that after the confounding various people's stories go off in various directions, but the flood is the major event they all can go back to as if it was the beginning of the world we now know, and in many ways it is!

On that thought, one of the things I find most interesting in looking at the myths of various cultures is the fact they tend to intermingle the creation story with the flood of Noah's day to the point Noah coming off the ark was the creation. In many cases this is because people didn't know or did/do not want to admit that God had to destroy the world with a flood because man's sinfulness had become so great. Those who don't want to maintain the truth resisted it right from the start with the Tower of Babel idea, and even the "church" does not like, nor often does it teach the truth of man's corruption correctly. This is because people don't know how to elevate humanity out of a situation where The One True God of creation had to come down to destroy it because man tried to go on without God in their lives, in the same way they still desire to this day, and it led to utter corruption. To do so leaves no room for man's self improvement without total surrender to God. Thus, in many cases the story is not that there was a world before the flood (at least not one where people were just like us) that failed to handle the responsibility the knowledge of good and evil brought. Instead of an ark that the one righteous man left on the earth walked out of with His family and the animals, which had all survived only because of a plan God gave in order to provide humans a second chance to get it right, the story goes that something such as an egg hatched and out of it came all

that is living, including man himself, or at least the people that gave birth to the world of people that now exists.

I also like to point out how much we still attempt to simply twist the story today and call it scientific. The modern theory of evolution says there was some big bang that took place and everything evolved from there by a miracle far harder to accept than the fact there is a God Who created everything. Then whether a flood or a natural disaster caused by a comet or the like, there was an event that took out the great lizards which were evolving to rule the world and made room for the evolution of humans to be the dominate species. All this desperation to explain our past without totally throwing away all of the story line the Bible tells us is the truth, speaks to why the Greeks had a culture that became so popular. Especially in the earlier days, so close to the flood and Tower of Babel event, the facts about there being a flood and only one family surviving was well known. Greek mythology, instead of attempting to ignore the fact there was a pre-flood world, recognized that man was corrupted. However, it tells the tale in a way that says the humans on this side of the flood didn't just get a second chance but a rebirth - so to speak.

The part people really like is that it still avoids admitting mankind is a being created by an Almighty God Who has the right to judge us. It does this by winding together a story that, in the end, says humans descended from gods themselves for the most part. What is even better is that the mythology begins with the base idea that what was suppose to be powerful gods, actually ended up being displaced by their later offspring. This part of the tale gives humans hope that they too can one day rise up to displace, equal, or at least outgrow the need for any god(s) and become the ultimate masters of themselves, if not everything! This boils down what Nimrod and his cohorts at the Tower of Babel tried to instill as a way of keeping humans together, which was an attempt to teach that humans could literally outgrow their need for God, into a very workable story line. As seen through humanistic eyes, the Greek ways had real potential to bring the world back together and reverse the effect of the confounding of language. Even the Greek language itself was an attractive, sophisticated, and organized language people desired to use; so Greek culture seemed to have it all. This is what the beast has been and is all about to this very day!

Now, here's how their story backs up to get us to where the term "Hellenize" came from. By the time Greek culture began to be spread, the Greeks had a

collection, or what we term a “Pantheon,” of gods that lived on Mt. Olympus in Greece. There were twelve of these gods, and the male deity Zeus was basically the guy in charge. That guy thing I just said is important because that's the other element of the Greek gods that really attracted people. Most of the world's gods were animals, part animal, and/or just the powers of nature such as the sun, moon, wind, etc. Even the depictions of these gods, or what we'd call idols, that came to be looked at as the rulers of such powers, often had animal or part animal forms or some varied imagery. However, the gods of the Greeks, while some had their strange fanciful features, were at their core the epitome of human form in ways many even today would agree was/is a prime specimen. The females were the picture of ideal feminine beauty, and the male gods were images of athletic and muscular men. The images of those in the pantheon that varied from this truth were done so as a simple way to denote this god or that god's failure in being one of the true “good guys,” or some aspect of their character/nature the Greeks felt needed to be emphasized.

Now, the story of how the Olympic gods came to be is that there were gods before them called Titans. These gods were not everything one would want in a god, so the Olympic gods destroyed, imprisoned, and generally did away with most all of them. Where did these Titans come from? Well that's the part of the story that really fits with what the rest of the world already believed because, not going into all the details, the Titans were basically the result of there being primordial gods just doing their thing. The two major primordial Greek gods are the basis of all false religion, including evolution, telling us there is no True God and all this just came about in a way that means we don't have to answer to anyone. Why? Because ultimately the sky is our father and the earth is our mother. This is why environmentalism is looked at so wrong. It's not that God gave us a home we have a responsibility to be good stewards of, it's only the physical truth that if we don't take care of the planet to some degree, we will find ourselves with no livable environment!

False religions the world over feared the power of the sun, or sky in general, and mother earth had to be appeased in order to be blessed with food and shelter. Even those at the Tower of Babel believed this basic idea! However, in the Greek mythology they are just what they are, powers just doing what they do for the most part, and their creation of the Titans left the Titans with no obligation to respect them. No matter how much they may have had to face the fact these primordial gods

were in truth, powers, the challenge for the Titans was only in how to harness the power for their own use. The same would go for the Olympic gods brought about by the Titans. The Titans had made plenty of mistakes, and the Olympic gods were almost obligated to deal with those mistakes. If you're a human who desires there to be a higher power that can provide great things for you, you want that power to be something that is not perfect, because then you have an opportunity at self-improvement not just without them but in spite of them. There really is no moral obligation unless you feel inclined to become so powerful yourself that you can deal with the mistakes the higher powers may have or might make. That's a story most humans like immensely!

This is where the flood story comes into play. The primordial gods were basically places or things. Male deities, such as the sky, and female deities, like the all too familiar mother earth, gave birth to Titans. Two brothers out of the Titans named Prometheus and Epimetheus are important to our story. Two other Titans, a male and a female of course, would give rise to twelve gods of Olympia, but Prometheus is generally credited with creating humans to begin with. At the same time the Olympian god Zeus is said to have directed the gods in piecing together what Greek mythology claims to be the first woman, named Pandora. She is a mirror of Eve, for Eve was first in taking of the fruit God told Adam humans were not to take of. We clearly see this in that Pandora is famous for opening a box (which is said to actually be a bad translation of the fact it was a bottle) that released the evil of and/or on humanity. Prometheus' brother Epimetheus got together with Pandora and gave birth to a female named Pyrrha. Prometheus paired up with an inferior female deity (the category of which I won't go into an explanation of here), and gave birth to a male named Deucalion. In all this we already see an intermingling of gods and humans.

Next is the part of the story that really elevates the Olympic gods, because this is where we see these later gods actually being portrayed as the more intelligent and responsible ones, if you will. Humans, as they had come about by that time, weren't doing so good. Thus, the Olympian god Zeus is said to be responsible for destroying humans with a flood. Of course, most all the evil Zeus was destroying was caused by Pandora's irresponsible actions and was not really to be blamed on all humans, or the idea of humans existing. However, Zeus was tired of how high-minded the lowly irresponsible humans had become! This is in sharp contrast to the words in Genesis that tell us it grieved God that He had made man because man had chosen sin

over the righteousness God desired to teach them from the beginning. (Gen. 6:5-8) While God was saddened by the fact His righteousness demanded He not allow humans to continue in this way and the only answer was to destroy His most precious creation, Zeus gives post-flood humans a need to outgrow their gods if for no other reason than to protect themselves!

Again, to shorten a story, Deucalion and Pyrrha are said to be the only two survivors of this flood, other than the gods themselves, of course. How? Deucalion's father Prometheus is said to be able to see the future, and he had warned his son to build a chest in which Deucalion and Pyrrha could ride out the flood, which they did. In the end, the chest finally landed on the only mountaintop that had not been covered by the water, and Zeus' deluge was not a permanent condition on the earth, so dry ground was eventually available once again. This is actually a quite accurate portrait of the ark because the ark was not as much a boat, like many are taught, as it was a gigantic box made watertight. Its purpose was not to be sailed but to survive by bobbing on the water's surface. The other obvious part of the story is the mountaintop landing. God's Word tells us God had to cause the waters to recede for Noah to land on Mount Ararat because the flood had covered even the highest mountain, but the concept is the same as to where the post-flood world for humanity started.

Where the important difference comes in is that the Biblical story tells us God found one righteous man and saved humanity using that faithful servant, who would save himself; wife; three sons; and their three wives, by following God's instructions. What the Greek myth leaves one with are two individuals, who essentially escaped, whether worthy of it or not! However, these two survivors were also not just human but descendants from the gods themselves. Both their fathers were Titans, and Deucalion's mother was a being of power one way or another. While Pyrrha's mother was Pandora (the one responsible for releasing evil in the world), Pandora was said to be formed by each of the gods contributing something to her creation!

One interesting note about Pandora's box (or bottle) is that the one thing she kept inside was hope. Her daughter and son-in-law would now have the job of bringing hope to the earth, as everything had been destroyed by the flood. It is said that after consulting with wise powers, the two found they could do so by throwing the bones of their mother over their shoulders. This was concerning until they realized their true mother was the earth, not the latter gods that had "birthed" them!

Thus, they only needed to throw rocks or dirt over their shoulders and the earth would restore life according to their desire. Some say this is how human life was restored as the rocks Deucalion threw became men and the ones Pyrrha threw became women. However, what is interesting is that one way or another these two beings are credited with directly giving birth to a very familiar number of offspring - six. Three boys and three girls!

This Greek myth gives us exactly the same number of people to repopulate the earth as what the Bible tells us came off the ark. If one goes with the story that the rock throwing created other people, this just helps with the long held humanistic idea that there are superior people and inferior people living intermingled on the earth. The inferior humans are the ones who the earth just brought about, and the superior humans came from the six offspring of the two individuals who descended from the gods and survived the flood. This is the point where we finally get to the Hellenization term, because the Greeks believed they had descended directly from one of the three sons. The truth is they were right in that at least the original people who left the Tower of Babel for the region of the world the Greeks lived in descended from Noah's son Japheth. However, the name of the son the Greek story gives is Hellen! Thus, all "true" Greeks were called "Hellenes," and the spreading of their grand ideas to the rest of the world came to be known as Hellenization.

In all this we need to be clear on the fact that for all the contamination the truth had suffered, the basic knowledge that all groups of people came from a family or couple who survived a worldwide, or at least a great flood, was still intact by the time of Alexander. Literally cultures the world over have some kind of flood story, but God was ahead of all this contamination in giving us the true story in His Word, which He made readily available by entrusting it to a specific nation that He located at the crossroads of the world and even took into the very heart of the arising beast. Thus, what we see is not that the problem was the true story became completely lost and unavailable, but that many people are just not seeking and, in many cases, don't want the truth. What they want is a story that gives man power to do his own thing without God's "interference." The false narrative of the Greeks gave what man generally wanted, and still wants, but with an organization that other cultural myths lacked and which the humanistic mind liked a lot!

The whole idea that our originating forces were powers that could be manipulated, gods could be

outgrown and/or overthrown, because at least some humans were practically gods to begin with, was very attractive. The thought there were inferior humans that need to be ruled over by gods or godlike rulers who were practically obligated to organize ruling governments over large populations was excellent, and it all was taking man back to the obligations of the Tower of Babel! Of course, there would always continue to be fighting over who the ultimate ruler(s) should be. However, that brings us to what might be the most attractive thing about the Greek story, which is something the religions such as the Egyptian's lacked. The Greeks thought of all true Greeks as being superior humans, but beyond that typical truth it did not really attempt to define who the godlike humans were in all. In Egyptian thought, only Pharaoh's, possibly their families, and priests were godlike or superior; but in the Greek thinking, godlike qualities were determined through things such as athletic ability. Their games, which honored the Olympian gods, were not even like our modern iteration of these games in that there was no first, second, third recognized with medals and records to be broken. They were more about every competitor striving to be their best. This is a thought our modern games try to embody in certain ways, but the Greeks were the originators of the participation trophy. Wreaths of olive branches were given as prizes for participation as long as it was believed the person truly put forth their very best effort and honored the gods in doing so.

With or without the winners' podium, the point of the games were still to show who was strongest, fastest, etc. It was not to say everyone was a god or godlike, but the all inclusive thinking basically said anyone might be a god or godlike individual. If one doubts how purely this thinking goes back to the Tower of Babel's original religious thought which kept all people working together, one should stop to consider the fact that Nimrod was considered godlike on the basis he was a mighty hunter! (Gen. 10:8-10) People followed his leadership in some ways with the hope of gaining his stature. This also takes us directly into the most innovative part of the Greek idea, and that is the government part. Though many will claim the Greeks were the inventors of democracy, no one can prove there was no other culture that did not believe in the idea that many of the citizens of a community should get a say. However, this speaks again to the fact the Greeks put it all together in a neat package. There was a balance between giving control to the people at large, which avoided saying everyone wasn't godlike or capable of it, and at the same time recognizing there were people who should be in governing power on the basis they were!

Democratic ideas may very well be the best way for people to attempt to govern themselves and a truth we will have to live with until The Messiah returns. However, the real truth is the very best form of government is also the very worst form of government because that form is a total monarch. This is due to the fact it all simply depends on who the monarch is. For all the human failings there have been some good monarchs, but the reason many fear this form of government is because a good monarch can very easily switch to being or having a very bad monarch at anytime. The fact this led many people to fear the power of a total monarch is why some of the world will moan when Jesus comes back to rule the world, for when He does there will be nothing any man can do about it. Nonetheless, we will then have a perfect monarch Who can and will rule everything in perfection whether anyone agrees or not!

That being said, the democracy idea was a key part to the Hellenistic thought that made it so attractive because it deals, as well as anything can, with what the confounding of language had caused. This is why I stress when teaching the facts about the confounding causing people to separate across the earth in groups that divide along the family lines of the three sons of Noah, that God did not confound the language so man would do this! The choice to not separate at all was still in man's hands, but it would require people to settle down and begin to look at each other's ideas, not just be led around by those believed to rightfully be rulers. The fact man chose to separate along family lines shows man attempted to keep together the largest groups they could control, because if man was going to separate into distinct groups, it most logically should have divided along the lines of those who found common ground, interests, etc. Certainly the choice to fight with one another as opposed to allowing the free exchange of ideas between groups was man's idea; and while it might seem ironic or strange that the Greeks more than any of the other empires had so much infighting in light of all their unifying ideas, there is actually a good reason for it. No matter how much man may like to think and build philosophies that teach otherwise - humans need God!

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

