

God's Chosen People

(Still the Jewish People?)

Introduction

From Creation to the Flood (~2350 B.C.) was 1656 years by most Biblical records (Genesis 1, 5, 7).

- How God organized His people during that time is not clear.
- We are told that Enoch, the sixth generation from Adam, walked with God and was finally translated without seeing death (Hebrews 11:5).
- He was a prophet and was given special communications from heaven. (Jude 14-15).
 - Did he have a church?
 - We don't know, but likely he had a following. His son Methuselah was a godly man.

By the time of the great deluge only eight people were saved!

- Maybe that was the smallest "church" in over a thousand years.

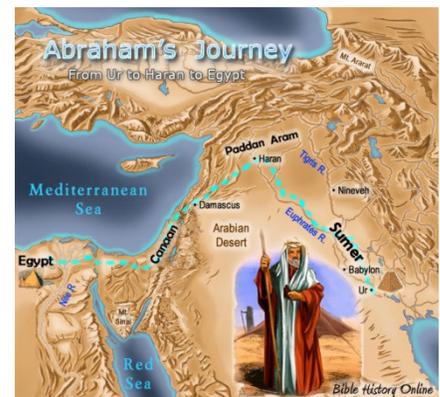
How Israel Began

That great Godly patriarch, Abraham, was called out of his heathen home of Ur in 1900 B.C. (Genesis 15:7).

- Ur was near the southern end of the Euphrates River in what is Iraq today.
- Noah's Flood had occurred ~450 years before.

Abraham was to be the "Father" of a great nation – a "chosen people" [the first post-flood "church"]. God promised him:

*"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, **Get thee out** of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, **unto a land** that I will show thee: And I will **make of thee a great nation**, and I will bless thee, and **make thy name great**; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"* (Genesis 12:1-3). He was later told that it would be the land of Canaan.



- His grandson, **Jacob**, would be **renamed Israel** (Genesis 32:28).
- Jacob's twelve sons would become the twelve tribes or divisions of Israel, later known as the Jewish people from the surviving lead tribe of Judah.

Few Bible students emphasize the **conditional nature** of those ancient promises to Abraham and his descendants. But they are pivotal to our understanding what it means to be a special people to God!

1. *"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.... And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations"* (Genesis 17:1, 9).
2. Then, to his son Isaac: *"I will be with thee and will bless thee; ... I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father"* (Genesis 26:3). **Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws ...**" (Genesis 26:3-5; cf. Hebrews 11:8-10, 13).

That faith and obedience was tested. His miracle son, Isaac, was to be "sacrificed."

"And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Genesis 22:2).

- *"Then God said, Now I know that you fear God"* (Genesis 22:12) **"because you have obeyed me"** (22:15-18).

Abraham's descendants were identified as God's chosen people (called the Hebrew people or Israelites):

1. Exodus 6:7: *"And I will take you to me for **a people**, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am **the LORD your God**, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."*
2. Deuteronomy 7:6: *"For **thou art an holy people** unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a **special people** unto himself, **above all people** that are upon the face of the earth."*
3. Isaiah 44:1: *"Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, **whom I have chosen**."* (cf. Leviticus 20:26, Deuteronomy 14:2, Psalm 135:4).

The Israelites, in turn, were given loyalty **conditions** just like Abraham:

1. ***“If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee”*** (Deuteronomy 28:15).
*“Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. **Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out”*** (Deuteronomy 28:16-19).
2. Amazing! Just before Moses died God gave him a prophecy that those chosen people **would be cursed** (vital to be aware of!):
*“And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and **this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.** Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?”* (Deuteronomy 31:16-17).
3. The Israelites fixed their hopes upon worldly greatness. From the time of their entrance to the land of Canaan, they departed from the commandments of God, and followed the ways of the heathen. It was in vain that God sent them warning by His prophets. In vain they suffered the chastisement of heathen oppression. Every reformation was followed by deeper apostasy.
4. ***While the Jews desired the advent of the Messiah, they had no conception of His mission*** (Luke 19:42-44). They did not seek redemption from sin, but deliverance from the Romans. They looked for the Messiah to come as a conqueror, to break the oppressor’s power, and exalt Israel to universal dominion. Thus the way was prepared for them to reject the Saviour. Moses’ prophecy came true!

Jesus was born of the lineage of David (Romans 1:3) that originated with that patriarch Abraham (Matthew 1:1), which fulfilled prophecy (II Samuel 7:14-16). ***But that didn’t rectify their rebellion!***

Israel Rejected God – God Tries to Befriend Them

God said through Isaiah:

*“It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that **thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth”*** (Isaiah 49:6).

- It was God’s purpose that Israel would evangelize the world.

- Yet the ten northern tribes rebelled and were lost shortly thereafter with Assyria's attack in 730 B.C.
- Then the Tribe of Judah rebelled and was finally taken into Babylonian captivity (605 B.C.).

After Judah returned to Canaan from seventy years captivity (536 B.C.), God tried to reestablish His covenant relationship with them. (Recall – He gave them 490 years of probation!)

*“Therefore, behold, **I will allure her** ... And I will betroth thee unto me **for ever** [most distant time]; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.... **Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God**” (Hosea 2:14a, 19-20, 23c).*

*“**A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God**” (Ezekiel 36:26-28).*

*“In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem ... And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of **grace and of supplications**” (Zechariah 12:8a, 10a).*

*“And **all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts**” (Malachi 3:12) (430 B.C.).*

All these texts were like marriage vows: “I promise forever.” But were these promises actually conditional? Did they mean that those people would be forever His chosen? It sounds that way!

Interestingly, Hosea was written ~750 B.C., Ezekiel ~586 B.C., Zechariah ~520 B.C. and Malachi ~430 B.C.

- Evangelicals never note that God's Jewish people entered that 490-year probationary period in 458–457 B.C. (Daniel 9). That period was to last **a maximum** of 490 years. **There would be no other!**
- That probation was so critical, so vital, that it terminated (was cut short) at the Cross (as we previously studied)!
- The Jewish people passed their own eternal sentence:
“Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matthew 27:25).

Something is very strange. God allures, promises “eternal” marriage with Israel – but they rejected him! ***There is a disconnect if we still accept them as God’s people.*** They instigated a divorce.

There are two amazing issues that must be analyzed:

1. Are there Old Testament texts that evangelicals skip over, redefining God’s chosen people?:
 - *“O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself”* (Hosea 13:9) (that was a “forever”). (This refers to the northern ten tribes).
 - *“Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it”* (Jeremiah 6:19) (just before the seventy years of captivity).
 - Then, later, came the 490-year probation.
2. Clearly, we need the New Testament to clarify the Old to help us understand! If we didn’t have that, there would be confusing texts on both sides of who those Jewish people were!

If the Jewish people were God’s chosen and their probation ran out, ***there should be evidence*** of that in the New Testament.

A Doomed People – Stunning!

The day after Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He and His disciples passed a fig tree. It was not the season yet for the fruit – but deceptively it had leaves. Fruit comes before the mature leaves in the fig trees (Mark 11:11-14).

- Jesus found no fruit.
- It was a mass of pretentious foliage.

Jesus did a singular act. He cursed the tree. It withered.

- Christ’s mission was to save (Luke 9:56).
- He delighted in mercy (Micah 7:18).
- He had no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11).
- This was a strange work (Isaiah 28:21).

Why did He destroy the fruitless fig tree?

- It symbolized the Jewish people.

What really was their apostasy?

Example One:

The challenge began in Christ's home town of Nazareth.

- After Jesus wooed their hearts in the synagogue by preaching on Isaiah 61:1-2 (when visiting His "home church") he noted: *"This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears"* (Luke 4:21b).
- He claimed that they were poor, broken-hearted, captive, blind and bruise and then suggested that the widows were even cursed by the famine in Elijah's day and God paid deference to the Gentiles (Luke 4:25-27). They were "captive" back then.

That offended the members of His home church deeply! It was like saying that they were no longer special to God! They reacted quickly and tried to kill Him (Luke 4:28-29).

- ***This was Christ's first warning to the Jewish people that they were departing from God.***
- Their unbelief brought reactive malice towards Jesus.

Example Two:

Jesus trapped the chief priest and Jewish elders with the parable of the householder who had constructed a vineyard with a watchtower (Matthew 21:33-46).

- He got them to pronounce their own doom:
*"They said unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will **let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen**, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons"* (21:41).
- Then Jesus pronounced a direct curse on them!
*"Therefore say I unto you, **The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof**"* (21:43).

Remember, this is now long after those Old Testament prophecies.

- Peter, in addressing the **Christian church** in Asia (Jews **and** Gentiles), said:
"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

The Jewish people were no longer to be His chosen people – a holy nation!

- ***That honor was to go to the budding Christian church!***
- It was not simply an “administrative transfer” – but the Jews were cursed. “The kingdom of God is taken from you!” ***The Christian church became His new people.***

The Jewish nation was a symbol of the people of all ages who scorn the pleadings of Infinite Love. The tears of Christ when He wept over Jerusalem were for the sins of all time. In the judgments pronounced upon Israel, those who reject the reproofs and warnings of God’s Holy Spirit, may read their own condemnation.

To those who refuse the precious rays of light which would illuminate the darkness, the mysteries of God’s word remain such forever. From them the truth is hidden. They walk blindly, and do not know the ruin before them. (Luke 19:42-44)

Example Three of their Apostasy:

Jesus was nearing the end of His work. He had just cursed the Jewish leaders (Matthew 23:2-33) while speaking to a vast multitude (vs 1). (There are “seven curses” in that chapter, symbolizing that their rebellion has now become complete.)

- Then He concluded with:

*“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! **Behold, your house is left unto you desolate**”* (Matthew 23:37-38).

“House” refers to “household” or “body of the Jews” and the “temple” (Jeremiah 12:7; Matthew 21:13; 24:1-3, 15). ***You’re finished, you are no longer My people.*** This was one to two days before His crucifixion.

Example Four:

Paul was in Rome under house arrest. He was permitted to address a large gathering that had come to see him.

- He ended his sermon. This is the record:

“And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: ... Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying

[Isaiah 6:9-10], *Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. **Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it***" (Acts 28:17-28).

- He, a Jew, recognized the global encompassing purpose of the Christian church.
- He later noted:

*"Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: 'Though the number of **the Israelites** be like the sand by the sea, **only the remnant will be saved**'"* (Romans 9:27).

Only a small number of the Jews of Israel will enter God's kingdom!

One of the saddest verses in the gospels is:

- *"Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.... because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation"* (Luke 19:42, 44b).
- The Jewish people would never accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah. That was hid from them (cf. John 10:16)!

Who are those remnant and Gentiles who will be saved?

Paul did note:

*"And so **all Israel shall be saved**: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob"* (Romans 11:26).

In light of what Jesus and Paul already said, is it possible that the word "Israel" has another meaning in the New Testament (in contradiction to "Israelites")?

- Remember those Old Testament texts and promises were given to a people God still considered His chosen, even while going into captivity for their rebellion (Assyrian then Babylonian)!
- Though they were often in apostasy:
 1. God did promise restoration from the Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 25:11, 29:10).
 2. **But** – through Daniel He gave the **last prophecy** of Israel's probationary favor – 70 weeks of years (490 years) are given to thy people (Daniel 9:24). **There would be no other chance.**

God does have a “new people” – a “new nation” just like Jesus said (Matthew 23:38). This is vital to see. The **Christian church** is now where His attention is drawn.

Paul ended his epistle to the Galatians like this:

- “... *peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the **Israel of God***” (Galatians 6:16).
- Many argue that this “Israel” means the Jews – but the context of this book reveals that that is wrong.
- “*For ye are all [the Christian Church] 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 ye are all one in Christ Jesus***” (Galatians 3:26-28).
“*And if ye be Christ’s, **then are ye Abraham’s seed**, and heirs according to the promise*” (Galatians 3:29).

Seeing this, it is clear that the position of many Evangelicals cannot be correct. Christians are the new “Israel of God.”

Paul, in a wonderful letter to the Ephesian church (mainly Gentiles – not Jews) said:

- “*That in the dispensation of the fulness of times **he might gather together in one** all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him*” (Ephesians 1:10).
- “*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but **fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God**; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*” (Ephesians 2:19-20).

Won’t Israel be grafted back into God’s favor?

- “*And they also, **if they abide not still in unbelief**, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again*” (Romans 11:23).
- “*For **whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Romans 10:13).
- **As individuals**, they can be grafted back in. **It is the nation that is cursed.**

“*Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a **remnant** shall be saved*” (Romans 9:27).

It is difficult to break from tradition and bias, but in light of what we have reviewed, all the eternal promises originally given to Abraham and his descendants belong to all believers in Jesus Christ.

Example – Story of the “dry bones.”

“And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.... So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.... So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army” (Ezekiel 37:3, 7, 10).

- Historically, the restoration of the Hebrew people back to Canaan from Babylonian captivity fulfilled this prophecy.
- But verses 20-28 talk about the emergence of Christ’s kingdom (even in chapter headings of many Bibles).
- Jesus is declared the Lamb, Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Root of David, fulfilling Ezekiel 37:24!
- Dry bones represent in end-time symbols a lukewarm Christian church. Yet, a remnant will emerge that are called saints (Revelation 12:17, 14:12).

Physical Israel vs Spiritual Israel

When Israel left Egypt ~ 1450 B.C., it was a mixed multitude (Abraham’s descendants and Gentiles) (Exodus 12:38).

- One of the Gentiles, Caleb, became a leader of the Tribe of Judah (Numbers 13:3, 6).
- Those Canaanites that were not destroyed were eventually integrated into Israel. The non-Abrahamic Rechabites were known for their fidelity (Jeremiah 35:1-19).

Throughout the monarchy thousands of Gentiles/foreigners were converted (I Chronicles 22:2 II Chronicles 30:25). During Solomon’s time, 153,600 were converted (II Chronicles 2:17).

- Everyone could be part of the covenant promises.
- True membership was not based on ancestry through “Abraham’s seed” (symbolic term) but on faith (Romans 2:29).

The key in all the analysis of the Hebrew people is that a diverse spiritual kingdom group of people was always in God’s mind.

- “And even they – **if** they do not continue in their unbelief – will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again” (Romans 11:23 – NET).
- Note the qualifier – “unbelief.” Everything related to salvation is conditional – even for the Jews.

That “unbelief” is *apistia*.

- Unwilling to commit to Jesus Christ – no trust in Him.
- Withholding belief.

Return to Nation of Israel

“And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God” (Amos 9:14-15).

- This was written in ~750 B.C.
- Intriguingly, in 590 B.C. Isaiah prophesied that a man by the name of Cyrus would do just that (Isaiah 44 and 45).
- In 539 B.C. Cyrus, king of the Medo-Persian Empire, issued an Empire-wide decree for the Jewish people to return to Canaan (rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the Temple).

There are over sixty “prophecies” that evangelical students suggest relate to the Jewish people and their land. All have either been fulfilled historically, apply to spiritual Israel or are utterly misappropriating how Scripture is to be studied!

Conclusion

1. Already we know from Daniel 9 that the Jewish people would be on probation for a specific time! (Daniel 9:24).
2. In 30 A.D. Jesus cut that probation short by three and a half years (Matthew 21:43, 23:37-38).
3. Individual Jews can be saved – grafted back into the “vine” – if they believe and identify with Jesus Christ (Romans 11:23, 9:24, 10:13).
4. We now have “spiritual Israel” (Galatians 3:27-29).

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