

## Israel, The Church, and Election

### 1. The People of God. 1 Peter 2:9-10.

#### 1. Peoplehood.

1. This is a characterization of the church that emphasizes its continuity with the O.T. and thus with the biblical history of salvation.
2. "People of God" aptly summarizes the description of Israel in the O.T. (*e.g.*, Deut. 32:9; cf. Heb. 11:25), so much so that in the N.T. "the people" without qualification can refer to Israel (2 Peter 2:1).
3. The combined expression "I am your God" and "You are my people" (Deut. 26:17-18; 29:12-13; Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 32:33; Hos. 2:23) served as something of a covenant formula to describe the intimate relationship between God and his chosen people.
4. The O.T. idea was still strong at the beginning of the Christian era, as seen in the birth narratives in Luke.
  1. The angel told Zechariah that his son John would "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).
  2. The prophecy of Zechariah himself combined many themes encountered in the O.T.: a people of God (Luke 1:68), who raises up a Savior in the house of David (Luke 1:69), remembers his holy covenant identified with his oath to Abraham (Luke 1:72-73), grants forgiveness of sins (Luke 1:77), and gives light to those in darkness (Luke 1:79).
  3. "People of God" both provided the background for the concept of the church and served to describe a particular aspect of it.
5. To be the people of God carried the promise that he would live among them (Lev. 26:11-12; Ezek. 37:27).
  1. Those passages that combine the idea of being God's people with his living among them are applied to present Christian living (2 Cor. 6:16-7:1; John 14:23).
  2. The description "people of God" defined the character of the people and identified who was their God.
6. "People" serves in the N.T. to emphasize Christians as drawn from Gentile as well as Jews (Acts 15:14), with the result that in some passages (while keeping overtones of the inclusion of Gentiles) it simply refers to the church (Acts 18:10).
  1. 1 Pet. 2:9-10, appropriating the new covenant language of Exodus

19:5-6 supplemented by Hosea 2:23 and Isaiah 43:20-21, claims the full title "people of God" for Christians.

2. The idea of "people" permeates the passage.
  1. The use of "people" in English.
    1. In English "people" is used for an aggregate of individuals -- How many people are here.
    2. It is also used to apply to human beings as such -- people will be people.
  2. In the Bible, "people" customarily means a single corporate whole, a nation or a race viewed as a collective entity.
    1. In this sense we may truly speak of "one people."
    2. We approximate this meaning when we speak of "the American people."
    3. Most often in the Bible "people" most often refers to God's people, Israel, although the word is used of other "peoples."
    4. In Greek the word is *laos*, from which English derives the word "laity."
      1. In the Bible the *laos* is the whole people, not a part (not even the largest part).
      2. In reference to Israel and the church, this is a chosen people, a people with a special status and dignity because of the relationship with God.
3. The most important things said about this people in 1 Peter 2:10 is that it is God's.
  1. Compare Titus 2:14 ("who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works"), "of his own" in the sense of being "special," using the same word as the Greek translation of Exodus 19:5-6 (
    2. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: 6 and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.
    3. The defining characteristic of this people is that it is the "people of God"; their peculiar, distinguishing feature is that they are the divine possession.

4. The accent falls on God's creative activity, his choosing, his saving work, his possession (1 Peter 2:9).
5. He is the one who made it a people (1 Peter 2:10) and not just a collection of individuals or a group organized around a false or lesser principle.
4. There is much concern today about what gives a person identity; for the church identity comes from belonging to God.
7. Paul underscores that the church called from Jews and Gentiles is indeed a divine society by applying the words of Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 to it: "23 and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory, 24 *even* us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles? 25 As he saith also in Hosea, I will call that my people, which was not my people (Hebrew - no kin of mine); And her beloved, that was not beloved (Hebrew - one for whom no natural affection or compassion is felt). 26 And it shall be, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, There shall they be called sons of the living God."
  1. Deut 32:21 tells us what is involved in being "not a people": They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; They have provoked me to anger with their vanities: And I will move them to jealousy with those that are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.
  2. A pagan nation is not truly a "people" in the full biblical sense, because it is not chosen by God, follows the ways of idolatry and immorality ("foolish"), and so has a false center of unity.
  3. In Eph. 2:12, Paul makes the contrast for Gentiles outside of Christ and in Christ: that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.
2. Other Biblical Terminology for the People of God.
  1. Israel of God.
    1. "Israel" was applied to the nation particularly in its religious aspect (*e.g.*, Pss. 98:3; 121:4), even when it failed to live up to its calling (Pss. 130:7-8; 131:3).
    2. Paul affirmed the perspective that physical descent was not sufficient for being a part of God's people (Rom. 9:6-8; cf. Matt. 3:9-10), so he could speak of "Israel after the flesh" (1 Cor. 10:18).

3. Philippians 3:3 comes close to expressing the idea of a "spiritual Israel": for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh:
  4. The only explicit use of the phrase "Israel of God" in the N.T. occurs in Galatians 6:16: 15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. 16 And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace *be* upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.
2. Royal priesthood.
    1. At the inauguration of the covenant Israel was designated a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6, sometimes rendered a "priestly kingdom").
    2. This is part of the terminology applied to Christians in 1 Peter 2:9 (cf. 1 Peter 2:5, "holy priesthood") and Rev. 1:6.
  3. Holy nation -- this again is part of the privileged description of Israel in Exodus 19:6 appropriated in 1 Peter 2:9.
  4. Righteous remnant.
    1. Out of the larger nation of Israel only a few were righteous, only a few were what the whole was meant to be.
      1. As we have seen in our study of Ezekiel, this became painfully evident in times of national apostasy and rebellion.
      2. Although only a remnant survived God's punishments on the people, that remnant became the object of God's favor.
    2. Paul quotes Isaiah 10:20-23 and 1:9 in Romans 9:27-28 to show that the small number of Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah had a precedent in the earlier history when God kept a faithful remnant out of the whole nation (cf. Rom. 11:1-5, "5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace).
  5. Covenant people.
    1. According to Romans 9:4, among the privileges of the Israelites was possession of the covenants.
    2. While there is much more that could be said, we simply note here in preparation for our discussion of election that God's original calling of a people in Abraham finds fulfillment in Christ (Gal. 3:6-29; Rom. 4:13-16; Luke 1:54-55, 72-73; Acts 3:25-26).
2. Election.
    1. The covenant was made with a particular people.
      1. God's people is a chosen race (1 Peter 2:9), that is, a chosen group and not chosen individuals.

2. The people of God is an elect people, a chosen people (1 Pet. 1:1 - "Elect" and "chosen" are alternative English translations of the same word).
  3. For the connection between "people" and "election," note the parallelism in Psalm 105:43 -- And he brought forth his people with joy, *And* his chosen with singing.
  4. God chose a people for his own possession (1 Peter 2:9); note the connection of election and possession is Psalm 135:4 -- For Jehovah hath chosen Jacob unto himself, *And* Israel for his own possession.
  5. The idea of Israel, or the church, as a "chosen people" is often offensive, and the doctrine of election has been the subject of much theological controversy through the centuries.
  6. Let us see what the Scripture teaches concerning election.
2. God's choice of a people.
    1. Most of the references in the Bible to God's election have to do with the choice of a group, what is sometimes referred to as corporate election.
      1. God chose Abraham and all who were in him, that is, his descendants.
        1. The call of Abraham is first expressed in Genesis 12:1-2, and already the call includes the promise that from him will come a great nation.
        2. The Hebrew word "know" is used in Genesis 18:18-19 for God's choosing him and making of him a "mighty nation"; God knew him in a special and intimate way, revealing himself to Abraham and making Abraham and his family a recipient of promises and an instrument of blessing.
        3. The choice of Abraham by God continued to be a frequent theme in the Bible.
          1. Deut. 4:37 -- And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out with his presence, with his great power, out of Egypt;
          2. Neh. 9:7-8 -- Thou art Jehovah the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham, 8 and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite, and the Girgashite, to give it unto his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous.

4. The choice of Abraham included his descendants in its provisions.
2. God chose Jacob (or Israel) and all in him.
  1. The promises to Abraham were repeated to his son Isaac (Gen. 26:24) and his grandson Jacob (Gen. 28:13-14), in each case including the offspring in the blessing.
  2. Deut. 7:6 uses the language of election for the people descended from Israel (Jacob): For thou art a holy people unto Jehovah thy God: Jehovah thy God hath chosen thee to be a people for his own possession, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth.
    1. This election was not because of Israel's virtues, but an expression of the Lord's love (Deut. 7:8).
    2. Choice by God made the people holy, consecrated, or set apart for God, because they became his special possession (cf. Deut. 14:2; Ps. 135:4).
    3. Once again, note that the choice of the patriarchs included their descendants (Deut. 10:15; cf. Acts 13:17).
    4. Israel was the "chosen people" not because of any merit or virtue of their own but by reason of God's love for and covenant with the patriarchs (Deut. 7:7-11; cf. 9:4-5).
3. God chose the tribe descended from Levi for the priesthood (Deut. 18:5).
  1. Notice the wording of the reminder of this choice in 1 Samuel 2:27-28a, 30:
  2. And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, Did I reveal myself unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt *in bondage* to Pharaoh's house? 28 and did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up unto mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? . . . 30 Therefore Jehovah, the God of Israel, saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now Jehovah saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.
  3. The covenant with Levi did not guarantee that all the Levites would be faithful to their task (Mal. 2:4-9).
4. God chose David and his descendants for the kingship.
  1. This choice involved a rejection of Saul and his family (1 Sam.

13:14).

2. The Lord's promise spoken by the prophet Nathan to David became filled with Messianic overtones: 12 When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. . . .15 but my lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 16 And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. (2 Sam. 7:12, 15-16.)
3. An important echo of this election of the family of David is found in Psalm 132:11-12: Jehovah hath sworn unto David in truth; He will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. 12 If thy children will keep my covenant And my testimony that I shall teach them, Their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore.
4. The choice of David's lineage for the kingship did not prevent individual descendants of his from being rejected from the kingship nor indeed the complete cessation of a human representative in the office after the fall of Judah to the Babylonians.
5. Election was not, therefore, incompatible with the condition, "If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony."
3. In these cases -- Abraham, Jacob, Levi, David -- the choice of an individual was the choice of a group, the descendants of the person chosen; the recognition of this divine choice is expressed in the N.T.: "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they sojourned in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm led he them forth out of it." (Acts 13:17.)

### 3. God's Choice of Christ.

1. Particularly important for the understanding of the nature of the church is God's choice of Christ; here, too, the election of an individual included a group, the people who belong to him.
2. The choice of a group in the O.T. did not guarantee the inclusion of all individuals in that group in the blessings for which they were chose.
  1. There was a progressive narrowing down of God's choice.
  2. Not all the children of Abraham were chosen, only Isaac (Gen. 21:12;

- Rom. 9:7).
3. Of Isaac's twin sons, Jacob was chosen (Gen. 25:23 and Mal. 1:2-3, quoted in Rom. 9:11-13).
  4. The words "I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau" seem particularly arbitrary and harsh unless one understands Hebrew usage.
    1. These words are not about emotions but are acts of will.
    2. Love is elective.
    3. Love in biblical language involves choice.
    4. Even out of the descendants of Jacob, God chose a remnant (Rom. 11:5, literally, "a remnant according to the election of grace," making a comparison to the times of Elijah in 1 Kings 19:10,14, 17).
    5. Paul's argument in Romans 9:6-29 shows that God has always dealt with people on the basis of promise or call, not flesh or works.
  3. Christ is the "Chosen One" of God.
    1. God's choice within Israel finally focused on the One Person.
    2. One of the titles given to Jesus as the Messiah was God's "Chosen ONE."
    3. As such, he was acknowledged by the voice from heaven on the mount of transfiguration (Luke 9:35), and by this title the leaders of the Jewish people at the crucifixion defined the significance of Messiah (Luke 23:35).
  4. Jesus is presented in the N.T. as the "seed," the offspring of descendant, of Abraham (Matt. 1:1; Gal 3:16).
    1. He is the true Israel.
    2. Matthew 2:15 quotes Hosea 11:1 as referring to Jesus.
    3. The prophet's words referred to Israel, the son of God called from Egypt.
    4. Matthew could apply the text to Jesus as the embodiment of the nation.
    5. What happened to Israel in its calling and election was applicable to Jesus; what was true of Israel in the ideal sense was true of Jesus.
    6. In a similar way, Matthew 12:18-21 quotes Isaiah 42:1-4 as fulfilled in Jesus.
    7. In some of the "Servant Songs" of Isaiah the servant is a group, either the nation of Israel or the faithful remnant within the nation (Isa. 41:8-9; 44:1).
    8. Matthew can individualize these statements, because Jesus fulfills what was intended by God for the people.
  5. Similarly, Jesus is the son of David (Matt. 1:1; 21:9).



1. His resurrection is presented as the fulfillment of the promise that a descendant of David would occupy his throne (Acts 2 30-31; 13:33, with reference to Ps. 2).
  2. Jesus Christ is God's Chosen One.
  3. He is the fulfillment of God's choice of Abraham, Jacob, and David.
4. God's Choice of Christians.
1. All who are in Christ are included in His election.
    1. God chose Abraham (and all in him); God chose Jacob (and all in him); God chose David (and all in him); God chose Christ (and all in Him).
    2. Just as all who were "in" Abraham, Israel, or David were included in their election, so it is with Christ.
    3. The election of Christ entails the election of those in Christ.
    4. The plan of God for Christians is spoken of in the same way as for Christ: foreknown (1 Pet. 1:20; Rom. 8:29), predestined (Acts 4:28; Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:29-30), and loved before the foundation of the world (John 17:24; Eph. 1:4).
    5. God continues to choose a category, a group -- believers in Christ.
    6. Christians are in Christ as Jews are in Abraham and humanity is in Adam (cf. Eph. 1:10).
  2. Paul wrote to the church of the Thessalonians, knowing, "brethren beloved of God, your election" (1 Thess. 1:4), and then stated the reason for the confidence, "how that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and *in* much assurance; even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake" (1 Thess. 1:5).
    1. As in most cases, the emphasis is on the chosenness of the people, not the act of choosing.
    2. In a subsequent passage, Paul speaks in similar terms: "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2:13-14.)
    3. The means of salvation are the Spirit's sanctification and human faith.
    4. Election is connected with the gospel in the former passage, with faith in the latter.
    5. The faith is the result of the proclamation of the gospel and both center

in Christ.

6. 1st Peter incorporates similar ideas.
  1. The address of the book is to those who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in sanctification by the Spirit with the goal of obedience and sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 1:2.)
  2. They were a chosen race (1 Pet. 2:9) and are further defined as "you who believe" (1 Pet. 2:6-7).
3. Election of Christians is expressly stated to be in Christ.
  1. 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: 5 having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,. . . 11 in whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will;. . . 13 in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, -- in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:4-5, 11,13).
  2. The chapter as a whole is anchored in the historical events of Christ's death and resurrection.
    1. The same elements found in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 1 Peter are brought together here: God's choice and predestination, the Holy Spirit, the proclamation of the gospel (the word of truth), and belief.
    2. The emphasis is that God's election occurred "in Christ."
    3. Those who are "in Christ" through hearing the word of truth, believing in Christ, and being sealed with the Holy Spirit are those who are holy and blameless children of God, according to God's love and good pleasure.
  3. The same principles apply to John's teaching.
    1. No one come to Christ unless drawn by God's influence (John 6:44).
    2. The manner of that drawing is explained as hearing and learning from the Father (John 6:45).
    3. Christ chooses us before we choose him (John 15:16).
    4. No one, not even the devil, is able to snatch his followers from him (John 10:28-29), but they are able voluntarily to run away from him (John 6:70; 13:18).
  4. Christians are elect because they have been called by God and because of an

act of his mercy.

1. The church of God was obtained with the blood of his own son (Acts 20:28).
  2. The word "obtained" or "acquired" recalls the Greek of Isaiah 43:21, "the people which I formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise."
5. In Christ, Christians share the election of Abraham.
1. As Christ is the unique seed or offspring of Abraham (Gal. 3:16), so those who are in Christ become the offspring or children of Abraham: "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:29).
  2. As spiritual children of Abraham through Christ, Christians share his election and blessings.
  3. They become children of Israel, so that the same corporate or group terms are applied to them (1 Pet. 2:4-5, 9).
  4. All this is because of sharing Christ's election.
  5. As He is "the Elect One" or "the Chosen One", Christians are called "the elect ones" (1 Pet. 1:1-2).
  6. They share Abraham's and Israel's election by reason of sharing Christ's election.
  7. Just as Abraham's and Israel's election was corporate and included their descendants, so God in choosing Christ chose all those who are in him.
  8. One was in Abraham by natural birth; one is in Christ by a spiritual birth (Gal. 3:27).
5. It is not said in scripture that God has chosen Christians individually.
1. He has chosen those in Christ; he has not chosen who will be in Christ.
  2. God elects a community, and the community he chooses now are those in Christ.
  3. A person may reject Christ and refuse the election.
  4. Israel at Sinai could have refused to be God's people.
  5. In some ways, it may be hard to imagine their doing so, yet in a few days they were worshipping the golden calf.
  6. Those once chosen may fall away (Rom. 9:6).
  7. For example, the Levites were chosen for the priesthood, but individual Levites could be disqualified (Lev. 10:1-2; 1 Sam. 2:27-36).
  8. The dynasty of David was forever, but individual descendants could be

punished and rejected from the kingship (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:4, 28-45).