

God's Chosen People ...

YESTERDAY AND TODAY

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God's Word is written for God's chosen people. Apple of His Eye Ministries is a former LWML Mission Grant recipient. This study, written by two friends of the LWML, gives us a glimpse of the Gospel as it is shared to those of Jewish faith.



Opening Prayer: Lord and Father of all, You have called us to be Your chosen people. Help us to see the great blessing it is to be called Your children and to share that blessing with those around us. In Your Son's name we pray. Amen.

YESTERDAY (Old Testament)

From the very beginning of creation, God was making choices. He chose to create the light, the expanse (sky), the earth, the sun, moon, and stars, the birds and sea creatures, the beasts of the earth, and man made in His image, male and female. All this in six days!

Read **Genesis 1:1-27**. Share some thoughts of how God's creation gives us some hints into God's Chosen people ... Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow.

God, as the Creator, is holy, and the people He chooses for Himself must also be holy — a principle found throughout Scripture. As God lives by high standards, so must His people keep those same high standards as an example to the rest of the world. Just as a human government sends out ambassadors to other nations to represent it in its affairs within those nations, God chose Israel to represent Him. What were His reasons? _____

Read **Deuteronomy 7:6-11**. God's choice of Israel was an act of love, even though He knew from the start that they would ultimately fail. God knew from the foundation of the world that all mankind, including Israel, would need a Savior.

If any people were to succeed as God's model nation, it would be the children of Abraham. This is not because they were better, but because, beginning with Abraham, they had a relationship with God. God sought to take His relationship to another level by establishing three covenants between Himself and His chosen people. (Note: God made other covenants throughout Scripture, but these three relate specifically to His chosen people, the nation of Israel).

One: The "Abrahamic Covenant" is an unconditional (unilateral) covenant. Here God made promises to Abraham that required nothing of Abraham. Read **Genesis 12:1-3** (if time permits also read **Genesis 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-11**).

List the seven unconditional promises made in the "Abrahamic Covenant" to the Jewish nation.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Two: The "Mosaic Covenant" is a conditional (bilateral) covenant made between God and the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. Read **Exodus 19:1-6** (if time permits also read **Exodus 20:1-31:18; Deuteronomy 4:13; Galatians 3:16-19**).

In establishing the Mosaic Covenant with Israel, the terms of the relationship are set. This time the terms are different. With Abraham, the terms were quite gracious and unilateral — Abraham simply had to believe. Now God says having saved you (from slavery in Egypt), I want you to live like My people. What expectation does God have for His people (verse 5)? _____

This is a law covenant. Israel must do certain things, not to be saved, but to stay in the Promised Land. If they keep the covenant, they receive the blessings. If they break the covenant, they will experience the curses of the covenant.

Later in the Old Testament, that's exactly what we'll see happen. Sadly, Israel will break the covenant and will experience God's judgment in the form of exile. Part of what happens in the Mosaic Covenant is we are taught that we cannot obey God on our own. We cannot keep our side of the bargain. We are going to need someone to obey for us, and that someone is going to be Jesus Christ.

Discuss how this Mosaic Covenant (Law Covenant/Ten Commandments) is a problem for more than just the Jewish people. It is also a problem for us. What's the solution to this broken covenant problem?

Three: The "New Covenant" is an unconditional (unilateral) covenant. The promise of the New Covenant was specifically *with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31)*. These were the same Israelites who had previously received the Mosaic Covenant with its external laws, although they failed to keep it.

Read **Jeremiah 31:31-34** (If time permits also read **32:37-41; Ezekiel 36:26-27; 37:21-28; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6-7; Hebrews 8:8-13; 9:15; 12:24**). The New Covenant would be radically different from the Mosaic Covenant, as God's laws would now be _____

(**Jeremiah 31:33**). God also revealed they _____ and then declared, _____ (**Jeremiah 31:34**).

The prophet Ezekiel unveiled that God would give the Holy Spirit to dwell in all His people as a blessing associated with the New Covenant (**Ezekiel 36:26-27; 37:14, 26-27**).

TODAY (New Testament)

When a search is made in Holy Scripture, the record shows that all the major covenants have been made with the nation Israel or with individuals of the Jewish people for the benefit of the nation. Every one of the 33 places where the word "covenant" (διαθήκη) is used in the New Testament, there is a reference to, and a discussion of, the covenant relationships existing between Israel and God as set forth in the Old Testament Scriptures. This declaration is made with the understanding that the New Covenant was first given to Israel (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**), and that we, the present-day believers, enter into the blessings of that covenant because we are united with Christ who is the mediator of the New Covenant.

The New Covenant is specifically mentioned by the Lord Jesus on the night He was betrayed before He went to the cross and shed His blood and died. At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (other names include The Sacrament of the Altar, Holy Communion, etc.), which is celebrated by Christian believers today.

Read **1 Corinthians 11:23-26** and **Luke 22:19-20**. What is it that we receive in this Lord's Supper? _____

We Gentiles have direct connection to God's love, grace, and mercy in this New Covenant discussed above. What do Paul's words in **Romans 11:11-24** tell about God's plan of salvation? _____

Discuss these passages. What does it mean that the Gentiles have been grafted into God's plan of salvation? _____

Finally, Peter, in his first epistle, writing to persecuted Christians in Asia Minor, (from his Jewish context) is connecting God's Covenants of yesterday (Old Testament) with His chosen Jewish people to God's New Covenant of today (New Testament) with His chosen Gentile people who have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light of Jesus Christ, the Messiah!

Read **1 Peter 2:1-10**. All of Jesus' disciples got it as the examples from Paul and Peter above show us. God's New Covenant of today (New Testament) didn't mean God had moved on to a "Plan B," but that God is welcoming the Gentiles as chosen people into His plan of salvation.

Discuss these verses. What does this mean for Jewish people and Gentile people in God's plan of salvation?

What is God's purpose in all this? _____

Be confident in the love our Savior has for you and all people. He has created and redeemed you — His chosen people — for His purpose.

Closing Prayer: O God of light, Your Word is an unfailing light to Your chosen people. Guide us to those whom You would have us share Your story of love, grace, and salvation. Let us never belittle the enormous love You have for all people. In Your Son's name we pray, Amen.