



God's Chosen People . . . Yesterday and Today

God's Word is written for God's chosen people. Apple of His Eye Ministries is a former Mission Grant recipient of the LWML. 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

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. ⁶And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. ⁹And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. ¹⁴And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." ²¹So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was

good. ²² And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. ²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man^[h] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

SHARE some thoughts of how God's creation gives us some hints into God's Chosen People . . . Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow?

Answers may vary. However, some thoughts might include:

- 1. God's LOVE for everything He created is evident in His creation;*
- 2. He CARES for everything He created as is evident in the "complete" package He put together with everything supporting everything;*
- 3. If God were meticulous in how He created the world, it makes sense that He would feel the same about MAN MADE IN HIS IMAGE; and finally,*
- 4. It's that LOVE, CARING, and MAN MADE IN HIS IMAGE, that gives us insight into God choosing His people yesterday, today, and tomorrow.*

God, as the Creator, is therefore 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

⁶ "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹ Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ¹⁰ and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. ¹¹ You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today.

He chose Israel to be His own people, a special treasure for His own purposes.

He chose them to demonstrate His love for them. He simply loved them. When God loves someone, He puts a great deal of responsibility on him.

He chose them to keep His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with whom He also had a special relationship.

He chose them to make a covenant with them, under which they were to keep His commandments and obey Him in everything. In return, He would bless them immensely.

God's choice of Israel was an act of love for them, 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. So, 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)

1. The “Abrahamic Covenant” is an unconditional (unilateral – *one way*) 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)

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

There are seven unconditional promises made in the “Abrahamic Covenant,” to the Jewish nation. What are they?

1) I will make you into a great nation. 2) I will bless you. 3) I will make your name great. 4) You will be a blessing. 5) I will bless those who bless you. 6) Whoever curses you I will curse. 7) All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

2. 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)

On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ² They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, ³ while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴ ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

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 (see verse 5)?

I want you to live in such a way that people can tell that you are my people and that you will bring glory to my name.

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 have broken 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 then 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/10 Commandments) is a problem for more than just the Jewish people. It is also a problem for us.

Answers can vary, however, some thoughts might include:

- 1. Our Original Sin (See Genesis 3; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12-21);*
- 2. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23);*
- 3. If we believe we are without sin we are deceiving ourselves and calling God a liar (1 John 1:8-10).*

What's the solution to this broken covenant problem?

We are going to need someone to obey for us, and that someone is going to be Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 1:13-14; Hebrews 9:15-22; John 3:16).

3. The "New Covenant" is an unconditional (unilateral) covenant. The promise of the New Covenant was specifically with "the house of Israel and with the house 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)

³¹ "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

The New Covenant would be radically different from the Mosaic Covenant, as God's laws would now be *within them, and I will write it on their hearts* (Jeremiah 31:33).

God also revealed they *shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest*, and then declared, *for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.* (Jeremiah 31:34).

The prophet Ezekiel unveiled that God would give the Holy Spirit to indwell 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 thirty-three 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

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for^[a] you. Do this in remembrance of me."^[b] ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

READ Luke 22:19-20

¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

What is it that we receive in this Lord's Supper?

Forgiveness of Sins, Eternal Salvation, and Protection from Satan and all evil!

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

Romans 11:11-24

¹¹ So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. ¹² Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion^[a] mean! ¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? ¹⁶ If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root^[b] of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. ¹⁹ Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. ²² Note then the kindness and

the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. ²³ And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

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

In Romans 11:11-24, Paul compares Israel to the natural branches of a cultivated olive tree and the Gentile believers to the branches of a wild olive tree. The natural branches (Israel) were broken off, and the wild branches (Gentiles) were grafted in (Verse 17). The Gentiles, then, have been made partakers of the promises and inherit the blessings of God's 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

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. ² Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴ As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." ⁷ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," ⁸ and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

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

That ALL who trust in Jesus Christ are now God's chosen people. It is no longer just an ethnic Jewish people of God, but a spiritual people of God. Again, it's not that we are now on a new track, but we are joined to Israel going all the way back to Abraham.

What is God's purpose in all this?

God's purpose is that the whole world, Jewish people, and Gentiles, might know the love of God in Jesus Christ, the Messiah. That is your mission; that is your calling; and that is your identity. You are the chosen people of God!

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