

Being Chosen & Elected

(God's Choice and What it means to be Chosen)

Dated 28/8/2016

Reading: Genesis 12:1-3 and 26:3-5

The Jewish are often called the Chosen People—a term that has caused many to be accuse God of favoritism and the Jews of being smug elite(complacent/pleased with oneself), who thinks that God prefers them over all other people and nations.

Chosenness is strongly associated with favoritism- meaning most liked, preferred, chosen, ideal, treasured etc etc. God's chosen status demands two things:

(1) being faithful and (2) Being obedient

Election is about God choosing a people as His own. The Old Testament shows that God elected Israel to be His people. This election is not based on numerical strength or numbers. Israel was and still is a small nation. God chose Israel as an expression of His love to her. This great theme of :the chosen people “ can be traced back through out the OT.

God begins by calling Abraham; through Abraham, He calls Israel; and finally through Israel, He calls the Christian Church into being. In the New Testament, we see “election by grace” becomes a theme of major importance.

The Call.

While we automatically think of Israel and the Jewish people as the “Chosen People”, that call actually began with one man—Abraham. Only 400 years had passed since the great flood and the world itself was not yet populated by a vast variety of people. The nations at that time were more like City-States, rife(widespread) with paganism and polytheism(belief in more than one God). Only 4 centuries after the flood, mankind was still lost. God called Abraham out of one of those cities, to a land that He would show him. Abraham didn't know where that land was located. He trusted God's direction and promise that he was to become a nation that would bring the truth of the One True God to the world.

The call of Abram(later named Abraham-Ge17:5) as recorded in Genesis 12, begins a new chapter in the OT revelation of God's purpose to redeem and save humanity. God intended to have a man, who would know and serve Him with devoted faith. From this man would come a family who would know, teach and keep the ways of the LORD. From this family would come a CHOSEN NATION of people, who would be distinct/noticeably different, from other nations AND be carriers of the revelation and blessings of God. From this nation would come the promised off-spring of the women(Ge3:15), Jesus Christ—the savior of the world(Gal3:8,16,18).

Several important principles can be derived/deduced from Abraham's call:

1. Abraham's call involved separating himself from his country, his people and his household(Ge12:1), in order to become an alien & stranger on earth(Heb11:13). In Abraham God was establishing the important principle that His people were to separate themselves from all that hinders His purpose for their lives.
2. God promised Abraham three things—(a) a land, (b) a great nation through his descendants and (c) a blessing that would affect all the nations of the earth (Ge12:2-3). The New Testament clearly teaches that the last element of this promise is being fulfilled in the missionary proclamation of the gospel of Christ(read Act3:25 & Gal 3:8).

3. Abraham's call involved not only an earthly land, but also a heavenly one. His vision came to encompass an ultimate home no longer on earth but in heaven, and a city whose architect and builder was God Himself. Abraham henceforth, desired and sought a heavenly country where he would live forever with his God in righteousness, joy and peace(read Heb11:9-10, 14-16 and compare with Rev 21:1-4 and 22:1-5). Until then, he would be an alien and stranger on the earth (Heb11:9, 13).
4. The call of Abraham contained not only promises, but also obligations. God required both obedience and personal commitment from Abraham to Him, in order to receive what was promised.

We need to understand and remember that all relationships are established on the basis of responsibility to remain faithful. Abraham marks the beginning of the Hebrew people. Because he responded to God's call and promise with resolute faith that expressed itself in obedience to God.

God's Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God's relationship with His people is described throughout the Bible in terms of "Covenant". The word first occurs in Genesis 6:18 and extends into the New Testament, where God made a new covenant with humankind in Jesus Christ. By understanding God's covenant with patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), **we learn about how God wants us to live in covenantal relationship with Him.**

- (a) God's special covenant name as revealed in the Bible is Yahweh, translated as LORD.(Ge2:4 and Ex3:14) Inherent in this personal and covenant name is God's loving-kindness, His redemptive concern for the human race, His faithful presence with His people and His desire to be in fellowship with them and to be their Lord.
- (b) The fundamental element/promise of the covenant is "to be your God and the God of your descendants after you (Genesis 17:7). On this rested all the other promises that were part of the covenant. His grace, protection, goodness and blessings are given to them in love (Jer11:4;24:7;30:22; 32:38; Eze 11:20; 36:28 and Zec8:8).
- (c) The ultimate goal of God's covenant with humankind was to bring salvation-not just to one nation (Israel) but to the whole human race. Already with Abraham, God promised that in him "all people on earth "will be blessed (Ge12:3; 18:18; 22:18) God extended His covenant grace to the nation of Israel in order that they might be "a light for the gentiles"(Isa49:6;cf 42:6). This covenant was fulfilled through the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as Redeemer.
- (d) In the various covenant arrangements that God made with humans throughout Scriptures, two principles are operative. (1) God **alone** initiated the promises and obligations of his covenant and (2) human beings were **expected to accept** them in obedient faith. **At no time**, however, were people in a situation where they could bargain with God about the conditions/stipulations of the covenant.

Not only was the faith necessary for Abraham to receive the covenant initially, **but** God also required that if covenant blessings were to continue, Abraham had to make a **sincere effort to please Him through an obedient life. *God demanded that Abraham walk before Him AND be blameless(Ge17:1)***. In other words, if his faith were not accompanied by obedience(cf Ro1:5), Abraham would disqualify himself from participation in God's eternal purposes.

- In one separate instance, God tested Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice his son Isaac(Ge22:1-2). We know that Abraham passed this test and God continued His covenant with him.
- God specifically commanded Abraham and his descendants that every male child born in his household be circumcised(Ge17:9-13). God stipulated that any male not circumcised would be cut off from God's people (Ge17:14). In other words, refusal to obey God, would lead to removal of covenant blessings.
- God's covenant with Abraham was called an "everlasting covenant" in Genesis 17:17. God intended that the covenant be a permanent arrangement. For example, His promise that the land of Canaan would be an ever lasting possession for Abraham and his descendants (17:8) was broken because of Israel's apostasy and Judah's idolatry and disregard of God's laws(Isa24:5 and Jer31:32). Subsequently, the whole nation of Israel lost their possession and was carried away into exile (Assyria and Babylon).

God's covenant with Isaac. God sought to establish the Abrahamic Covenant with each succeeding generation, beginning with Isaac-Abraham's son (17:21). It was not enough that Isaac had Abraham as his father; he too had to accept God's promises by faith. Only then would God say "I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants"(Ge26:24).

For the 20 years of their marriage, Isaac & Rebekah had no children. Rebekah did not conceive until Isaac earnestly prayed (Ge25:21). This answered prayer demonstrates that the covenant's fulfillment is not realized through natural means, but only by God's gracious action. **Isaac also had to be obedient in order to continue receiving covenant blessings.**

God's covenant with Jacob.

Isaac and Rebekah had two children, Esau and Jacob. Esau despised his birthright as we read in Ge25:31-33. Furthermore, he showed indifference(no interest) to the righteous standards of his parents by marrying two women, who were not followers of the True God. Consequently, Jacob who did desire the spiritual blessings to Abraham & Isaac, received the promises rather than Esau(Ge28:13-15). As with Abraham and Isaac, the covenant with Jacob required the "obedience that comes from faith" for its continuance. He had to obey the Lord's command & will to leave Haran (Ge31:13) and return to the promised land of Canaan, more specifically to Bethel (Ge35:1-7). After that God renewed with him the covenant promises made to Abraham (Ge35:9-13).

God's covenant with the Israelites.

Chapter 19 in the book of Exodus, records the establishment of God's covenant with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai (Horeb). This covenant was an extension of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It defined the conditions by which Israel would remain God's treasured possession, continue in His blessings and carry out His will. God intended that Israel be a unique people, chosen and set-apart to Him for His purpose. A kingdom of priests who were holy and pure. God's ultimate goal was to bring the Savior into the world through the covenant people. After God revealed the Ten Commandments and many other laws of the covenant, the Israelites vowed with one voice "Every thing that the LORD has said, we will do"(Ex24:3). **This agreement to keep God's law remained a condition of the covenant. In other words, Israel's continued election as the people of God was conditioned on obeying Him as their Lord.**

God stipulated clearly, what would happen if His people failed to keep the covenant obligations. The penalty of disobedience was removal from the covenant people, either by banishment or death (Ex31:14-15). These were not ideal threats. {Examples are: God’s warning at the time of exodus that those who did not follow His instructions of the Passover, would be cut off(Ex12:15,19; 12:15). Also at Kadesh, when the Israelites rebelled against the Lord in unbelief and refused to enter Canaan because they feared the inhabitants. God became angry with them and caused them to wander in the desert for the next 39 years. All Israelites over age 20 died(excluding Caleb & Joshua(Nu13:26-14:39))}.

The people’s disobedience and unbelief caused them to forfeit living in the land of God’s promised rest (compare Ps95:7-11 and Heb 3:9-11).

Note: The obedience God expected from His people was not perfection **BUT** a sincere and earnest desire to obey.

After the rebellious and unfaithful generation of Israelites had died during the 39 years of wandering in the desert, God prepared a whole new generation of Israelites to enter the Promised Land, by renewing the covenant with Him, in the plains of Moab. This covenant renewal is the main focus of the book of Deuteronomy. The basic format of this covenant remained the same as the covenant at Mount Sinai.(compare Ex24:1-8 to Dt27).

Moses instructed the people to refresh their memories periodically concerning the covenant

The call to the **covenant remembrance and renewal** is also relevant today. The New Testament is God’s Covenant with us.

-We remember His covenant with us as we read & study His revelation with His promises and stipulations.

- As we hear it proclaimed in preaching the God’s Word.

- Most specifically, as we participate in the Lord’s Supper (1-Cor 11:7-34).

Through the Lord’s Supper, we also renew our commitment to **LOVE** the Lord and with our whole heart, mind and Soul, to **OBEY HIM** and to **SERVE HIM** with a total commitment.

May God help us to remember our covenant relationship with Yeshua—the Messiah, now and always.....Amen.