

Who is God's people?

Israel? The Jews? The Church?

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Who is God's people? and who is God's chosen people? And is there even a difference between the two?

Jesus told the Parable of the Banquet shortly before He was crucified. In the parable, the invited wedding guests did not want to attend the wedding, and therefore the king invited anyone that wanted to come to the wedding. Jesus ended the parable with the words: ***"For many are called, but few are chosen."*** (Matt 22:14)

To make a long story short: The few that are chosen are the 12 Tribes of Israel. The many that are called are the Gentile nations of the world that can become a part of God's people by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's chosen people

In the books of Genesis and Exodus we read that God chose one people, Israel, to be His people. Note that it was God who CHOSE Israel. God did not ask all the nations of the world if they wanted to be His people. He did not ask the Egyptians, the Indians, the Chinese or the Native Americans: "Do you want to be my people?"

Under the Mosaic Covenant and the entire Old Testament period, it was only the 12 Tribes of Israel that was God's people. They were God's chosen people because God had chosen them, and not any other nation, to be His people.

Occasionally, Gentiles would attach themselves to Israel and become a part of Israel. For example, the mixed multitude of Egyptians that followed the Israelites in the Exodus, Rahab the Canaanite and Ruth the Moabitess, etc. But these Gentiles were exceptions. For all intents and purposes, it was only the 12 Tribes of Israel that was God's people under the Old Testament period.

After King Solomon's death, the Kingdom of the 12 Tribes of Israel was divided into two kingdoms, the Kingdom of Israel of the 10 Tribes and the Kingdom of Judah of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The 10 Tribes of Israel continued to worship pagan gods, and therefore the God of Israel "divorced" the 10 Tribes, so they became Not-My-People (Hebrew: 'LoAmmi'). The two tribes of the House of Judah (Jews) would, however, remain God's people.

We read about that in the book of Hosea (written in the middle of the 8th century BC), where we also read that one day in the future, the 10 Tribes would again become God's people. The context is that God told the prophet Hosea to give names to his children that were symbolic of how God would deal with Israel and Judah:

“And she [Hosea’s wife] conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah [Hebrew: ‘Not Loved’]: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.

But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.

Then said God, Call his name Loammi [Hebrew: ‘Not My People’]: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.”
(Hosea 1:6-11)

Around 721 BC, the Assyrian Empire invaded and deported the 10 Tribes of Israel, and they became lost to world history. Many Bible students have, however, traced the 10 Tribes of Israel to Europe, where they today make up the core of the nations of north-western Europe.

After the exile of the 10 Tribes, it was only the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Judah that were God’s people. The Kingdom of Judah consisted only of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and after the exile of the 10 Tribes, the Judeans became known as Jews (which simply means Judean or a man of Judah).

When the Lord Jesus Christ was born, it was, therefore, only the Jews – a remnant of the 12 Tribes - that were God’s people.

God’s people

The Lord Jesus Christ taught that both Israelites as well as Gentiles could become a part of God’s people by faith in Him. When the Gospel went across the world, God was in effect asking all the nations and individuals of the world if they wanted to become a part of His people. Under the Christian Covenant, God WAS asking the Egyptians, the Indians, the Chinese, the Native Americans, etc., if they wanted to become a part of His people.

The bulk of the Jewish people rejected Christ, and, therefore, the Jews as a nation were no longer a part of God’s people after they had rejected Christ. However, Christ also prophesied that one day in the distant future, the Jews would eventually come to faith in Him, just like Hosea prophesied 800 years earlier that the 10 Tribes of Israel also eventually would become God’s people again.

God’s chosen people vs. God’s people

Under the Christian Covenant, both Israelites and Gentiles can be a part of God's people. But does that mean that in the eyes of God there is no difference between Israelites and Gentiles? No.

The 12 Tribes of Israel was the people that God first chose to be His people. Most of the 12 Tribes of Israel rejected the God of Israel. The 10 Tribes of Israel constantly worshipped pagan gods, and were, therefore, rejected by God when they were deported out of the land of Israel around 721 BC. As a nation, the two tribes of the House of Judah rejected the God of Israel when they rejected the Lord Jesus Christ.

Only a remnant of the Jews - the 12 apostles and their followers – remained faithful to the God of Israel by following Christ and became the early Church. Thereby, a remnant of the 12 Tribes of Israel did become the first Christian Church. Soon, so many Gentiles became Christians that the Church became predominantly Gentile, but still, the original Church was made up of Israelites. That is why St Paul compares the Church with an olive tree, where the Gentile "branches" are grafted into the original Israelite olive tree in Romans 11:11-24.

Replacement theology?

Replacement theology claims that the 12 Tribes of Israel completely stopped being God's people at the Crucifixion, and that God continued with a clean slate, and that now only the Church is God's people. This is false.

God did not stop working through the 12 Tribes of Israel. The 12 Tribes of Israel were not replaced by the Church. God's people Israel was ENLARGED, because through the New Covenant people of all nations could be "adopted" into God's people. This is what is meant by "Spiritual Israel", which means all Christian believers, whether they are descended from the 12 Tribes of Israel or not.

The 12 Tribes of Israel were not replaced by the Church. The Church is the Christian Israelites and the Christian Gentiles combined.

It is not Israel that has been replaced. It is the Old Mosaic Covenant that has been replaced by the New Christian Covenant, as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: ***"In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."*** (Heb 8:13)

Under the Mosaic Covenant only Israelites could, for all intents and purposes, be God's people. Under the Christian Covenant, all Israelites and all Gentiles can become God's people through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Under the Christian Covenant, both Israelites and Gentiles do need to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, as Simon Peter told the Jewish worshippers on the Temple Mount: ***"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."*** (Acts 3:22-23)

In other words, Israelites that do not believe in Christ are Not-God's-People, even though they are descended from the 12 Tribes of Israel that God chose.

However, the 12 Tribes of Israel are STILL God's chosen people. In the book of Revelation chapter 7 we read that in the End Times prior to the Great Tribulation, God will put a seal upon 144,000 male virgins of the 12 Tribes of Israel so they will be divinely protected during the Great Tribulation.

In God's eyes, it is of a great importance that there will be a faithful remnant of flesh-and-blood Israelites. That is why the 144,000 Israelites are going to be sealed and protected.

The House of Israel and the House of Judah in the End Times

Even in the sealing of the 144,000 Israelites, we can see the difference between the House of Israel of the 10 Tribes of Israel and the House of Judah of the two tribes (Jews).

The 10 Tribes of Israel migrated to north-western Europe, where most of them became Protestant nations. There are, therefore, millions of faithful Christian Israelites of the 10 Tribes. The Jews, as a nation, rejected Christ and still do to this day, with a few exceptions (such as Jews for Jesus). Therefore, it should not be a problem for God to find faithful Christians of the 10 Tribes of Israel, but it could very well be a challenge to find 12,000 faithful Christian Jewish male virgins to be sealed, if it was not up to God.

When the 12 Tribes of Israel are listed in Revelation chapter 7, there are some anomalies. Most notably, the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are missing. (We have explained that in the book *The Lost 10 Tribes of Israel in Europe*, and in the video 'Why is Dan missing from the 144,000 in Revelation?') Another anomaly is that the first tribe mentioned is the tribe of Judah (Rev 7:5). In the listings of the 12 Tribes of Israel in the Bible, Judah is nowhere listed as the first, except in Revelation chapter 7. The firstborn son of Jacob-Israel was Reuben, and the tribe of Reuben is usually mentioned first. Judah was only the fourth son of Jacob-Israel. Why is Judah then mentioned first in Revelation?

That is because that since the Crucifixion of Christ, there have been very few Jews that have believed in Christ. When there suddenly are going to be 12,000 sealed Christian Jews alongside 12,000 sealed Israelites of the other tribes, it is going to be a spectacular thing. That is why Judah is mentioned first.

The New Covenant built upon a remnant of Israel

The New Christian Covenant was built upon a remnant of the 12 Tribes of Israel, because the 12 apostles and the 120 first Christian Jews of the House of Judah constituted the earliest Church (Acts 1:15).

This way of God continuing His people by removing a righteous minority out of the midst of an unrighteous majority is a principle we can observe from Genesis to Revelation.

At the time of the Flood, when the fallen angels procreated with earthly women (Gen 6:1-4), God did not wipe away all mankind, but saved Noah and his family and continued His people through Noah.

After God destroyed the Tower of Babel (Gen 11), God did not entirely reject all mankind, but called Abraham and his family out of Ur of the Chaldees (Gen 12) – which was close to the Tower of Babel – and continued His people through Abraham.

At the time of the Exodus, God led the 12 Tribes of Israel out of Egypt, and continued His people through the 12 Tribes.

When the Kingdom of the 10 Tribes of Israel had worshipped pagan gods for centuries, God removed them out of the land of Israel and continued His people with the two tribes of the Kingdom of Judah.

After the Lord Jesus Christ had finished His ministry, the majority of the Jews rejected Him, and God continued His people with the faithful remnant of Jews that believed in Jesus.

At the time of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church had become so corrupt and unwilling to change for the better, that God led the 10 Tribes of Israel in northern Europe out of the Roman Catholic Church and continued His people through the Protestant denominations.

God's people in the future

During the Great Tribulation, the majority of mankind will take the Mark of the Beast and follow the Great Harlot of Babylon. But just like before, God will continue His people through the 144,000 sealed Israelites and the Everlasting Gospel they are going to proclaim (Rev 14:5). The 144,000 are going to be the “holy first fruits” of God's people in the Millennial Kingdom (Rev 14:4), a tiny remnant compared to everyone else of Israel of the flesh and of the Gentiles that are going to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

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