

PEOPLE OF THE PROMISE

Introduction

⁹ *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.* ¹⁰ *Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* (1 Peter 2:9-10)

A. The Christian is blessed as a participant in *a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God* (1 Peter 2:9)

1. Those receiving the letter would have heard this language in terms of Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16.
2. Peter, in few words, shows that the church does not cancel the Jewish heritage, but fulfills it.

B. Great benefits flow from an understanding that the Christian is part of a *people*, “the *people* of God” (1 Peter 2:10)

1. Peter portrays the church as a living, spiritual house, with Christ as the foundation.
2. Both picture community and this community is built upon the gospel as it was first preached to Abraham, the man of faith.

I. ISRAEL “AFTER THE FLESH”

A. God promised Abraham, “I will make you *a great nation*” (Gen 12:2).

- B. The Jewish people constituted “Israel *after the flesh*” (1 Cor 11:18).
- C. God made this physical nation of Israel “a special treasure” to Him above all people (Exod 19:5).
- D. He did this because of love (Deut 7:6-8)

⁶ For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

⁷ The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. ⁸ But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Deut 7:6-8)

II. SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

- A. But God also made another promise to Abraham, one that was not restricted to Abraham’s physical descendants. Genesis 22:18 says,

¹⁸ through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.” (Gen 22:18)

- 1. Paul explains in Galatians Gal 3:8:

⁸ The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”

- a. Through Abraham's seed the Messiah would come to save both Jew and Gentile.

2. Therefore Paul writes in Gal 3:13-16,

¹³ *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."* ¹⁴ *He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*

¹⁵ *Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case.* ¹⁶ *The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. (Gal 3:8, 13-16)*

- B. God's relationship with national Israel *anticipated* His present relationship with Christ's church.

1. Even under the Law of Moses God said,

¹² *I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. (Lev 26:12)*

2. Paul uses this in 2 Cor 6:16 to demonstrate God's presence with believers,

¹⁶ *... "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." (2 Cor 6:16)*

3. Here he speaks of a people who turns away from sin and turn toward God, perfecting holiness.

c. As God “redeemed” a group of people from *Egyptian slavery*, He has “redeemed” Christians from *slavery to sin*

¹⁴ *[Jesus] gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (Tit 2:14)*

1. That’s why Jesus said of himself:

²⁸ *... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mt 20:28)*

2. Indeed Jesus is the redeemer. Rev 5:9 extolls his honor as Redeemer.

⁹ *And they sang a new song:
“You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and
nation.
(Rev 5:9)*

d. Let’s remember that even under the Mosaic covenant, there was a more important consideration than whether one was physically an Israelite.

1. Jesus made a distinction between hereditary children and true children.

³⁷ *I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. (John 8:37)*

³⁸ *I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father."*

³⁹ *"Abraham is our father," they answered.*

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. ⁴⁰As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. ⁴¹You are doing the things your own father does."
"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."

⁴⁴ *You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:37-41, 44)*

2. One's church attendance and family connections do not make a true child of God. Your true father is the one you imitate and obey.

²⁸ *A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God. (Rom 2:28-29)*

- E. Under the covenant of Christ, the Christian is *by faith* a descendant of Abraham (an “Israelite”) whether he is racially a Jew or a Gentile.

⁷ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. ⁸ The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” ⁹ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

²⁶ You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:7-9, 26-29)

- F. Hence, Christians constitute “the Israel of God” (**Gal. 6:16**), the “commonwealth of Israel” (Eph. 2:12).

III. CHRISTIANS ARE THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE BLESSINGS PROMISED TO THE FOREFATHERS OF ISRAEL.

- A. In the gospel of Jesus Christ is “the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers” (Acts 26:6).

- B. Abraham is the

¹¹ “father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.” (Rom 4:11)

- C. Salvation in Christ is what everything else has been leading up to -- Christians are those “on whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor 10:11).
- D. The “blessing of Abraham” (Gal 3:13,14) has come upon us. (Cf. Gal 3:8, 9, 24).

⁸ The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” ⁹ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Gal 3:8-9)

- E. God has “provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us” (Heb 11:39,40).

³⁹ These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. ⁴⁰ God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. (Heb 11:39-40)

Conclusion

- A. The Christian needs to understand that he is privileged to enjoy blessings that God has been working to provide and promising since the days of the Jewish patriarchs.
- B. How can we possibly “neglect so great a salvation” (Heb 2:1-4)?