

# A Biblical Perspective on the Jewish People



## A. The Old Testament

### 1. God's Call to Abraham –Why a “Chosen People”?

You may be surprised to learn that the Bible tells us that the great patriarch Abraham, who is often referred to today as the “father of the Jews”, was neither Jewish, nor was he from Israel. He was born and raised in the Mesopotamian city of Ur of the Chaldees (located in modern-day Iraq), and scholars believe he was known as a “Hebrew” because he was the descendant of the grandson of Shem, Eber. (See Genesis 10:24; 11:14,31; 14:13; 15:7.)

Because of Abraham's faith and love for the one true God, the Lord gave him a special blessing, promising him that He would make a great people out of him and his children, a nation in whom all the nations of the world would be blessed. Scripture tells us that,

“God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him” (Acts 10:34,35). “Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:11-13).

In other words, God loves all people, regardless of their race or nationality. He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” and to a saving knowledge of Himself (2 Peter 3:9). And the method God has chosen to reveal Himself and His plan of salvation to Man is by simply using witnesses, people who will be faithful to follow His ways and preach His truth to others.

“For it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21).

This is why God called and chose Abraham: to raise up a people who would live and preach His truth, to create a nation that would love and serve the one true God, and thus become a Godly example and beacon of hope in a world engulfed in the gross darkness of pagan idolatry, devilry and superstition. God’s design in establishing a “chosen people” was to make those people a blessing to all the other peoples of the world, that all could come to know Him and His truth. This is borne out in God’s original call to Abraham:

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. . . . In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice” (Genesis 12:2,3; 22:18).

Abraham was chosen and blessed by God not merely because he was a flesh and blood descendant of Eber (which is what made him a “Hebrew”), but because of his faith in the Lord!

“And he [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and He [God] counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6).

## **2. Isaac, Jacob and the Children of Israel**

The same blessing that God gave Abraham, that in his seed would all nations of the world be blessed, was passed onto his son Isaac (see Genesis 26:3,4), and to his grandson Jacob (see Genesis 28:13,14). Jacob, whose name literally means “supplanter” or “deceiver”, unfortunately lived up to his name (see Genesis 25:29- 34; 27:1-36; 28:13-14; 30:25-43), until he learned some hard lessons, after which he was renamed “Israel”, which means a “prince with God”.

Thus Jacob’s twelve sons were the original children of Israel, and from them sprang the twelve tribes which formed the Hebrew nation. When Jacob’s sons grew so jealous of their younger brother Joseph (whom Jacob favoured) that “they conspired against him, to slay him” (Genesis 37:18), it looked like the end of Joseph and a dark chapter in the early history of the children of Israel. But in His divine providence, God used their enmity towards their younger brother to eventually provide their entire clan with a haven where they would be able to safely multiply and greatly prosper.

Judah (one of the brothers) prevented the other brothers from killing Joseph by proposing, “What profit is it if we slay our brother? Let us sell him to the Ishmeelites [a passing band of Arab merchants] . . . and they sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver” (Genesis 37:26-28). To hide their deed from

their father, they took Joseph's coat and dipped it in goats' blood, leading poor old Jacob to believe that his favourite son had been slain and devoured by a wild beast.

The Ishmeelites sold Joseph as a slave in Egypt, where through a series of miracles, God enabled him to rise to a position of great power, second only to the pharaoh. So when severe famine gripped the entire region, Joseph was able to provide his father and estranged brethren a place of refuge in Egypt, where plentiful stores of grain sustained them through the famine. The children of Israel then settled down in the land of Egypt for 430 years, during which they multiplied into a nation of millions, prospering in every way "until another king arose which knew not Joseph" (Acts 7:18). God allowed an antagonistic pharaoh to arise who grievously oppressed and exploited them, until they made their dramatic exodus under the dynamic leadership of Moses. (See Acts 7:20-36.)

### **3. Moses and the Exodus**

Unfortunately, Moses had a lot of trouble with these Hebrew refugees from the pharaoh's injustice. Although they had just witnessed many mighty miracles which God performed in delivering them out of Egypt, they nevertheless doubted and rebelled against the Lord continually, causing Moses no end of grief and heartache.

In fact, shortly after their exodus, when Moses trekked up Mount Sinai where he communed with God for 40 days, receiving the Ten Commandments, the children of Israel forgot all about the Lord and made and worshipped a golden calf (one of the principal gods of Egypt). The Lord was so grieved at the backsliding and idolatry of His "chosen people" that he was ready to utterly destroy them all!—Even if it meant starting all over again with Moses alone, creating a whole new nation to be His witnesses!

"And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."' And the Lord said unto Moses, 'I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee [Moses] a great nation'" (Exodus 32:7-10).

However, Moses interceded for the people and pled for God to have mercy, and we are told that "the Lord turned from the evil which He thought to do unto His people" (Exodus 32:14).

After their stopover at Sinai, they reached the southern border of Canaan (Palestine), the land that God had promised to give them, and Moses sent out

twelve spies to survey the land. When the spies returned from Canaan, most of them gave a discouraging report of giants in the land. (See Numbers 13:31-33.) This caused the fearful and unbelieving children of Israel to murmur and lament that they had ever left Egypt in the first place.

“And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron [Moses’ brother]: and the whole congregation said unto them, ‘Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land . . . were it not better for us to return into Egypt?’ And they said one to another, ‘Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt!’” (Numbers 14:2-4).

God got so upset with these disbelieving, ungrateful children of Israel that He was again ready to absolutely destroy and disown them, and create a whole new nation from Moses.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘How long will this people provoke Me? And how long will it be ere they believe Me for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee [Moses] a greater nation and mightier than they” (Numbers 14:11,12).

Nevertheless, because of Moses’ fervent prayers and supplications for them, the Lord had mercy and again preserved Israel. (See Numbers 14:19,20.) However, because of their unbelief and murmuring, God ordered them to withdraw from the border of their Promised Land, and sentenced them to 40 years of perpetual wanderings through the harsh and desolate Sinaitic and Jordanian deserts, until the entire unbelieving older generation perished in the wilderness! God told them,

“Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against Me. . . . Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed Me” (Numbers 14:29; 32:11).

Reflecting on the children of Israel’s time in the wilderness, the Psalmist reminds us of how good God was to His people in miraculously delivering them from Egypt and providing for them in the wilderness, yet how unfaithful they were to Him:

“They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law; And forgot His works, and His wonders that He had shewed them.

Marvellous things did He in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt. . . . He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and He made the waters to stand as an heap . . . . How oft did they provoke Him in the wilderness, and grieve Him in the desert! Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy; How He had wrought His signs in Egypt . . . and made His Own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. He led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not His testimonies: But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside" (Psalm 78:10-13,40-43,52-57).

#### **4. Apostasy in the Promised Land**

After the unbelieving older generation of rebels died off in the wilderness, the younger generation of the children of Israel crossed the River Jordan and occupied the land of Canaan, the Lord going before them and doing great miracles. But sadly, once they had possessed the land, instead of being the shining example to the other nations of the world that God intended for them to be, they soon turned away from the Lord and fell into the same idolatry and spiritual wickedness as the heathen nations around them. For this reason, the Lord frequently let them be conquered and subjugated by the heathen nations.

"And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim [devil gods and idols]: And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. . . . And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and He sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies" (Judges 2:11-14).

To try to turn the hearts of His people away from idolatry and back to Himself, the Lord raised up leaders known as "judges".

"Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way . . . they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way" (Judges 2:16,17,19).

## 5. The Kingdom Established: Theocracy Abandoned

During the 300-year historical period known as the "Time of the Judges", the children of Israel were a loosely knit federation of tribes, with no central governmental authority. Their form of government was a theocracy, meaning that God Himself was supposed to be the direct Ruler of His people, through His judges and prophets. However, as they fell away from the Lord and grew envious of the heathen nations around them, they petitioned their final judge, the prophet Samuel, to appoint them a king.

"All the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel . . . and said unto him . . . `now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.' And the Lord said unto Samuel, `Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken Me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee" (1 Samuel 8:4-8).

Although Samuel protested and warned the people that it was not God's will or plan for them to try to make themselves like the ungodly nations around them, we are told:

"Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, `Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles'" (1 Samuel 8:19,20).

## 6. The Kingdom Divided

After becoming a kingdom, the children of Israel united under their first two kings, Saul and then David. However, because David's son, Solomon, departed from the Lord, worshipping the pagan devil gods of the heathen (see 1 Kings 11:4-10), as a judgement, the Lord let the united kingdom fall apart, for as soon as Solomon died, the ten northern tribes seceded from the central government of Jerusalem, forming the northern kingdom, called "Israel". The remaining two tribes of Judah and Benjamin formed the southern kingdom, called "Judah".

The official state religion of the northern kingdom was the same idolatry which had so infuriated Moses and the Lord in the wilderness, the worship of the golden calf. The southern kingdom, Judah, professed to still be true to Jehovah, but most of their kings tolerated or promoted idolatry and devilry (including the vile Canaanite religion of Baal worship, which was particularly abhorrent to the Lord, as its practice included the human sacrifice of small children).

“Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them” (Psalm 106:37-41).

Although God sent prophet after prophet to warn the kings and the people of both kingdoms to turn back to Him lest He allow the heathen to invade and overcome them, few of them hearkened to or believed the Lord’s voice, but instead despised and rejected His messengers, thus the judgements of God fell.

“Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, ‘Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets.’ Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God” (2 Kings 17:13,14).

“Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen. . . . And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy” (2 Chronicles 36:14-16).

“And I will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them: Because they have not hearkened to My words, saith the Lord, which I sent unto them by My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 29:18,19).

## **7. Captivity and Restoration**

The apostate northern kingdom was conquered and destroyed by Assyria around 721 B.C., and the southern kingdom was conquered and destroyed by Babylon in 586 B.C., at which time the city of Jerusalem and Solomon’s temple were utterly demolished. After being carried away into 70 years of captivity by

Babylon, the "Jews" (a nickname given them by the Babylonians, since those conquered by Babylon were from Judah) were allowed by Cyrus the Great, king of Persia (who had since conquered Babylon) to return to Palestine to rebuild Jerusalem and their temple.

Although a great moral and religious revival took place under the inspired leadership of men like Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, in a short while the people settled down and again began to forget their God, thus He again allowed them to be subjugated by the heathen. The Lord grew so weary with His people and their perpetual backsliding that in the final book of the Old Testament He told them that He would no longer accept their offerings, but that the Gentiles would become His people:

"I have no pleasure in you [Israel], saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering: for My name shall be great among the heathen" (Malachi 1:10,11).

## **8. Salvation Promised for the Gentiles**

God, knowing all things, had foreseen the Jews' rebellion against Him way back when the nation of Israel was first being formed in the wilderness with Moses. Through His prophet Moses, He told them that the time would come when He would raise up another people.

"But Jeshurun [Israel] waxed fat, and kicked [rebelled] . . . then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they Him to anger. And when the Lord saw it, He abhorred them and He said, 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward [rebellious and obstinate] generation, children in whom is no faith. . . . I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people [the Gentiles]; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation'" (Deuteronomy 32:15-21).

The prophet Isaiah was even more explicit in his warnings to Israel, showing them that the Lord was so wearied with the self-righteous hypocrisy of Israel, that He was going to turn to the Gentiles, a nation which had not been called by His name.

"I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not: I said, 'Behold Me, behold Me,' unto a nation that was not called by My name [the Gentiles]. I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people [the Jews], which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; which



say, 'Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou.' These are a smoke in My nose, a fire that burneth all the day. . . . And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto My chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call His servants by another name" (Isaiah 65:1,2,5,15).

The prophet Hosea confirmed very clearly that God was going to raise up a new people unto Himself:

"I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, 'Thou art My people'; and they shall say, 'Thou art my God'" (Hosea 2:23).

Furthermore, regarding Israel and her coming fate, Hosea prophesied,

"My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto Him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations" (Hosea 9:17).

## **B. The New Testament**

### **9. The Messiah's Arrival and Rejection**

IN THE 400 YEARS THAT PASSED between the last of the Old Testament prophets and the beginning of the New Testament, the Jews of Judah were subjugated by the Persians, the Greeks, and lastly, the Romans. The people had long awaited a promised Messiah, and most envisioned him as a great King who would come to liberate them from the political tyranny of the Roman pagans and re-establish their nation as a strong and united kingdom, as it had been almost 1,000 years earlier under King David.

When the time came that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, arrived, He preached that the Kingdom of God was a spiritual Kingdom, and that to enter it required faith.—Something that most of the Jews had been sorely lacking in.

When Jesus came, the very Son of God, He ministered primarily to the Jews, proclaiming,

"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel"  
(Matthew 15:24).

However, sad to say, they did not recognise or receive their Messiah:

"He came unto His Own [people], and His Own received Him not" (John 1:11).

## 10. The Jews' Forfeiture of the Kingdom

Throughout the Old Testament, God likened His Kingdom, His people, unto a vineyard, which He tends and cares for:

"For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant" (Isaiah 5:7).

In His parable of the wicked husbandmen (farmers), Jesus succinctly described the Jews' centuries-long rejection of God's messengers, culminating in their rejection of His Own Son, their Messiah.

"There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, 'They will reverence my son.' But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.' And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him."

Jesus then asked His listeners a most sombre question:

"When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, 'He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.' Jesus saith unto them, 'Did ye never read in the Scriptures, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" Therefore say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof'" (Matthew 21:33-43).

This shocking message, that the stewardship of God's Kingdom on Earth was going to be transferred from the Jewish nation to another "nation" or people, meaning the Christians, reverberates throughout the New Testament. Jesus' words after an encounter with a sincere and believing Roman soldier who had asked Him to heal his servant, make it very clear that flesh and blood Israel had forfeited the blessing she once possessed:

“Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith [as the Roman centurion manifested], no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west [Gentiles from outside of Israel], and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom [the Jews] shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:10-12).

Needless to say, such a message incurred the wrath and enmity of the influential Jewish leaders upon Jesus! While the Scriptures tell us that “the common people heard Him gladly” (Mark 12:37), the response of the jealous Jewish religious leaders, the scribes and the Pharisees, was quite the opposite: “And they were filled with madness, and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus. . . . and they sought to slay Him” (Luke 6:11; John 5:16).

## **11. A Question of Fatherhood**

When the Pharisees argued with Jesus that because they were the chosen seed of Abraham, they had no need for Him and the “freedom” He promised those who would receive His truth, His startling response so infuriated them that they “took up stones to cast at Him” (John 8:59).

“[Jesus said:] ‘I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.’ They answered and said unto him, ‘Abraham is our father.’ Jesus saith unto them, ‘If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill Me, a man that hath told you the truth which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father.’ Then said they to him, ‘We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.’ Jesus said unto them, ‘If God were your Father, ye would love Me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do ye not understand My speech? Even because ye cannot hear My word. Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do! He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it’” (John 8:38-44).

This highly charged denunciation of the Christ-rejecting Jewish leaders brings to mind a similar passage from Revelation, where the Lord was decrying the hypocrisy of those who claimed to be God’s chosen seed of Abraham, but who were, as Jesus said, “of their father the Devil”:

“I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan” (Revelation 2:9).

## 12. "How Often Would I Have Gathered Thee!"

Remember, from the very beginning God promised Abraham that his children were to be a blessing to all nations, all peoples, so that all Mankind could come to a knowledge of the true God. For centuries God tried to use the Jews for this purpose, sending them His prophets to guide them in the right way, but they persistently rebelled against the Lord and went their own way, persecuting and rejecting His messengers. As Jesus brought out in the parable of the wicked husbandmen, when God, in a final act of love, sent His Own beloved Son, and the keepers of the vineyard murdered Him, this would be their crowning crime! By rejecting and crucifying God's Son, Jesus, Israel forever forfeited her claim to any special right to God's blessings, until she repents and recognises and returns to the Messiah she rejected! Jesus made this clear in His final lament over the "City of David":

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord'" (Matthew 23:37-39).

Stephen, the first recorded martyr of the Early Church, castigated the Jewish religious leaders for their persistent rejection of God's messengers and their crucifixion of Christ by telling them,

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers!" (Acts 7:51,52).

The Apostle Paul also made it clear that the reason God's blessing was withdrawn from the Jews was because of their own rejection of His Word and Truth. This is why God had to turn to another "nation" which would love and serve Him and be His witnesses to the world.—The true Christians!

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, 'It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you [the Jews]: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles'" (Acts 13:46).

Please bear in mind that all of the apostles were Jewish. Their words and attitude towards the Jewish leaders who rejected Christ and the Gospel were not in any way "anti-Semitic". The apostles were simply, and no doubt painfully, facing the fact that many of their own people had failed to

receive their own Messiah, and that in rejecting God's Son, they were rejecting the very God they professed to believe in!

"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also" (1 John 2:22,23).

The Apostle Paul thus describes the sad state of his Jewish counterparts who refused their Messiah and were ceaselessly persecuting him and his fellow Christians:

"The Jews . . . both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16).

### **13. What about God's Promises to Abraham?**

If the flesh and blood Jews were no longer to be the chosen people of God, what about all of the promises that God made to Abraham? Did God break His Word? If the Jews were to ultimately be "cast out" as Jesus said, then had God's plan failed? The answer, of course, is no, God's plan didn't fail! His promises to Abraham have been fulfilled absolutely. Here's how:

The Scriptures tell us that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). As you may recall, this is why God blessed Abraham in the first place, "And he [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). Abraham was blessed and chosen of God because of his faith. The flesh and blood Jews were ultimately rejected by God because of their lack of faith! Therefore, Abraham was not so much the father of the Jews as he was the father of the faithful, those who have faith. Thus, Abraham's "seed" today are all of those—whether they are born Jew or Gentile—who believe in and receive God's Son, Jesus Christ the Messiah!

"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, 'In thee shall all nations be blessed.' So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. . . . That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:7-9,14).

In other words, God is saying that His children, His Israel, the "seed" or

children of Abraham in whom all nations are blessed, are not merely those who are born of a certain race, but all of those who have given their hearts to Him by faith in His Son, Jesus.

“For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children. . . . That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God” (Romans 9:6- 8).

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Romans 2:28,29).

Once we have received Jesus and are born again of His Spirit, we are liberated from the fleshly bounds of race and nationality:

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:28,29).

—Christians!

#### **14. Good News about God’s New Nation!**

We saw earlier in our study of Old Testament Scriptures that God foresaw the day that flesh and blood Israel would refuse to receive their Messiah. King David and the prophet Isaiah both prophesied that the coming Messiah was the foundation stone which flesh and blood Israel would reject and stumble upon:

“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner [chief cornerstone]. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes!” (Psalm 118:22,23).

“Thus saith the Lord God, `Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation'” (Isaiah 28:16).

—Jesus!

“The Lord of hosts Himself . . . shall be for a sanctuary; but for

a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel . . . and many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken" (Isaiah 8:13-15).

It was evident to the apostles that Jesus was the fulfilment of these Old Testament prophecies. Peter wrote:

"It is contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded.' Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient [disbelieve], the stone which the builders disallowed [rejected], the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the Word" (1 Peter 2:6-8).

In the next verse of this passage Peter concludes that God has a new "Chosen People", a new nation whom He has blessed and called to be His witnesses.

"But ye [born-again Christians] are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God!—Which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10).

So the sad news of God withdrawing His special blessing and calling from flesh and blood Israel is eclipsed by the tremendously good news that He has now called and brought into being a New Nation, a new "Chosen People", whom He has called to echo His praises in the light of His Love! For though He "came unto His Own [the Jews], and His Own received Him not" (John 1:11), the wonderful good news is spelled out clearly in the next two verses:

"But as many as received Him [Jesus], to them gave He power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on His name. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of Man, but of God" (John 1:12,13).

God is still "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9), and He yearns for all men, whatever their race or background, to come to personally know Him and His Love. His arms and His Kingdom are open wide to anyone—Jew or Gentile—who will simply believe on His Son Jesus and receive Him into their lives.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have

everlasting life" (John 3:16).

God bless you with His Love and salvation! If you have not yet received the Messiah, the "Anointed One", Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God into your heart, simply pray and ask Him into your heart today, and He will come in, and you too will become one of God's chosen people, a citizen of the eternal Kingdom of Heaven! He loves you!

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