

## God's Own Special People

God said to the Children of Israel, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you will be My own possession from among all peoples on earth, for all the earth is Mine and you will be to Me a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation" ... All the people answered together and said, "All that God has spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:4 to 6 & 8).

"You will be holy to Me, for I, the Lord God am holy and have set you apart from the peoples (on earth) so you should be Mine" (Leviticus 20:26). "You are a holy people to the Lord your God. Yahweh your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession above all peoples who are on the face of the earth. He did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because God loves you and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your forefathers. Yahweh brought you out (of Egypt) with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondage from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore, your God, He is God, the faithful God, Who keeps covenant and loving kindness with these who love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:6 to 9). "You are a holy people to the Lord your God and Yahweh has chosen you to be a people for His own possession above all peoples who are on the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 14:2). "Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land You have given us, as You swore to our forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey. Today your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You will keep and do them with all your heart and with all your soul. You have declared Yahweh this day to be your God and said you would walk in His ways, keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances and listen to His voice. God has declared you today to be a people for His own possession as He has promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments, to make you high above all the nations He has made, in praise, in name, in honour and you so may be a holy people to Yahweh your God as He has spoken" (Deuteronomy 26:15 to 19).

There is no doubt, the descendants of Abraham are a special, beloved people to the Lord our God. That will never change and the modern Israeli's are just as special and beloved as previous generations. When Jesus, Who was Jewish, came to earth to bring us salvation, any Gentile who sincerely accepted Him as their Saviour became adopted into Jesus' Spiritual family. We can all honestly say and mean what Ruth said and she meant it. 'Ruth said to Naomi (a Jewess), "Do not entreat me to leave you and to return from following after you, for where you go, I will go. Where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die, will I die and there will I be buried. God do so to me and more also, if anything but death part you and me" (Ruth 1:16 & 17).

The adherents of Jesus formed the early church then called the Assemblies of God (1 Corinthians 1:2). The Salvation Gospel started with Jewish people then spread to Gentiles. 'Hope is laid up for you in the heavens, which you heard about in the Word of Truth in the Gospel which has come to you, even as it is in all the (then known) world and is bearing fruit and growing as it does in you also since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth' (Colossians 1:5 & 6). 'The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all mankind, teaching us to deny unGodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and Godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus our Messiah, the Anointed One, Who gave Himself for us so He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Tell them all these things. Urge, advise, encourage, warn and rebuke with full authority. Let no one despise you or your teaching' (Titus 2:11 to 15).

Scripture reveals genuine Gentile believers are equal with Jewish people in God's affections. 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession so you may proclaim the excellence of God Who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. You (Gentiles) who in time past were no people but now are God's people. You who had not obtained mercy now have obtained mercy' (1 Peter 2:9 & 10). If we look around us, we can see this world is falling apart and nobody can control the decline of this earth. It is in almost total chaos, but through all of this chaos, Jesus is separating for Himself, purifying for Himself His own special people and that reality is an amazing thought. If we want God the Father to receive us, we are to come out from amongst sinful people, separate ourselves and not touch (that is we are not to be involved in) anything unholy. 'God said, "I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they will be My people. Come out from among them (non-believers) and be separate and touch no unclean thing and I will receive you. I will be to you a Father and you will be to Me as My sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty' (2 Corinthians 6:16 to 18).

The grace of God is His unmerited favour and blessing and it has come for the deliverance from sin and the eternal salvation for all mankind. It is His grace that teaches us how to behave. How many people know God's grace teaches?. It is solely by the grace of God we are saved, then God's grace has taught us to

reject all unGodliness and worldly desires, to live soberly, righteously and Godly lives in this present world while we wait and keep looking for the only blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus our Messiah, so that He might redeem us from all our iniquity and purify for Himself, His own special people. 'We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own purchased, special people' (1 Peter 2:9), and we have to act like it. He wants us to be zealous for good works. This is a beautiful description of the reality of God's own people, but to be one of God's special people, we must allow the Lord to purify us. Impurity has no place in God's people. If we want to partake in the Lamb's supper and enter into the Kingdom of God, then we cannot mix Godliness with carnality. Scripturally, that is linen with wool. In the Scriptures, linen and wool as garments have great significance. In this Bible study, we are dealing with the issue of a mixed 'garment' or mixed life-style. God strongly warns His people against three certain kinds of mixtures that He disapproves of. Mixed garments, mixed breeding of livestock and sowing with mixed seed. 'You will keep My statutes. You will not crossbreed your livestock. You will not sow your field with mixed seed, nor will you wear a garment of linen mixed with wool' (Leviticus 19:19). Everything has to be pure.

'Let us rejoice and shout for joy! Let us celebrate and give Him glory and honour for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It has been granted to her, to dress in pure fine linen, dazzling and white – for the fine linen is the righteous acts of God's holy people' (Revelation 19:7 & 8). This verse also means righteousness, being upright, just, living a Godly life, in deed, conduct and a right relationship with God. His people have to be pure. Linen represents righteousness and righteous acts of God's own people. That is what the bride (church) has to wear to be included in the Lamb's supper. It is not the imputed righteousness we receive when we receive Jesus, it is the outworked righteousness in our lives. It is the way we live. A bridal gown worn by a princess is very full. We have to ask ourselves this very important question, do we have enough 'material' (righteous works) to make a full 'bridal gown'? Whatever culture we are from, whatever country we live in, we do not marry while wearing scraps of soiled cloth. If we have no righteous acts, we will not be ready for the Lamb's supper, for the acts of righteousness make up the Scriptural 'fine linen'.

Wool cannot be used to make a Scriptural bridal garment. 'When they enter the gates of the inner court, they will be clothed in linen garments. No wool will be on them while they minister at the gates of the inner court and within the temple. They will have linen tiaras (formal headdress) on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies. They will not wear anything that causes them to sweat' (Ezekiel 44:17 & 18). The inner court is a picture of our personal relationship with the Lord. As priests to the Lord, we are to wear only pure 'linen' and not 'wool'. It is not the 'wool' of empty religious activities or 'busy-ness' that outfits us with linen, but the righteous acts that glorify God. The Scriptures tell us not to have a mixed life-style. We do not want people looking at our lives and saying, "If that what a Christian does, I do not want to be a Christian." Or, "The church is full of hypocrites." A lot of people have heard those two criticisms! We cannot be a Christian in church and a tyrant at home. We cannot get drunk on Saturday night and attend church on Sunday morning and expect to have any credibility. We cannot sing praises to God on Sunday, after watching questionable programs on television the day before. These are examples of a mixed life-style or mixed 'linen' and 'wool'. The Lord does not want that. We need to be as pure at home as we appear in church. We need to shun places like public bars and the like, unless we are sharing the Gospel in those places. We need to be more righteous than the Pharisees who were religious people without any conviction. God is not interested in empty religious activity that is 'sweaty'. We need to have the right spirit at all times, not just when people can see us.

Mixed 'livestock' ... If we breed different types of livestock, the result is sterility. For example, mules are sterile. They are a mixture of a horse and a donkey. They cannot reproduce and God wants us to reproduce Spiritual 'fruit', righteous acts that help increase the Kingdom of God. Some major problems in the modern church is 'wool' dressed up as 'linen', mixed life-styles and mixed beliefs which bring about sterile, carnal Christians who in reality, are not fit nor ready for the Kingdom of God. One example is so-called 'Christian' rock music. Rock music came from Africa and the beat was used to conjure up evil spirits. Modern rock music has the exact same result whether it is in Africa or a modern Western church. There is Christian music and there is rock music. To combine the two types of music results in sterile Christians who cannot produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit. It is like inviting the Baal worshippers to offer sacrifices in the holy temple of God. It cannot be done. If church leaders accept that kind of music, they accept the evil forces that come with it, and sadly, there is a lot of demonic activity in most Christian churches that can be directly attributed to the kind of music played in those churches. It takes a strong mature leader to stand up against that kind of music being played in their congregations and put a stop to it. There is no anointing of the Holy Spirit in churches that have that kind of music. We must be faithful to the Lord, to His Word and to the Holy Spirit.

Mixed harvest ... 'The seed is the Word of God' (Luke 8:11). The message we preach to someone is the seed we sow. We are to sow good seeds. We cannot say one thing and do another. We must be Christians all the time and it is God's grace that teaches us how to behave. Sometimes our lives can 'say' more than

our words ever can. If we preach a mixed message, we give a mixed message. If we claim to be a Christian – then we must live, act and speak like a Christian. The Scriptures give us a good example of mixed seed producing a mixed harvest. ‘The Kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while he was sleeping his enemy came and sowed tares/darnel (weeds that resemble wheat) among the wheat and went on his way. When the plants sprouted and formed grain, the weeds appeared and the servants of the owner came to him and asked, “Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Then how does it have weeds in it?”

The owner replied, “An enemy has done this.”

The servants asked him, “Do you want us to weed them out?”

He said, “No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the true wheat along with it. Let them grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will say to the reapers, ‘Gather the weed first and bind it in bundles to be burned but gather the wheat into my granary” ... “He Who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world and the good seed means the children of the Kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one and the enemy who sowed the weeds is the evil one. The harvest is the close of the age and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so it will be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels and they will gather out of His Kingdom all causes of offence and all who act wickedly, and will cast them into the furnace of fire” (Matthew 13:24 to 30 then 37 to 42).

We must never sow false seed that will lead people to believe false doctrine or lead them astray. When we share the Word of God, it must be the true Word of God. One false teaching around today is the ‘Dominion Theology’ that comes along with the ‘Rapture Theory’ and the ‘Replacement Theory’. They teach the church has replaced Israel and is going to get the world ready for Jesus’ second coming, take over the government of the world, all Christians are going to be ‘raptured off’ just before the tribulation, and the church ‘left behind’ will have everything nicely in order and the coming of Jesus will be the ‘icing on the cake’. That teaching is just not Scriptural. What did Jesus say? ‘Immediately after the tribulation ... the angels will come and gather God’s elite’ (Matthew 24:29 to 31). The condition of the world immediately before the coming of Jesus, is a condition of terrible tribulation. The church has not and never will replace Israel. The church will not be in control and have everything nicely in order. It is exactly the opposite. We will take a quick look at the words and warnings spoken by Jesus in Matthew 24:4 to 31, that is all still to come.

Verse 4; do not allow yourself to be misled into error! Do not believe false doctrines.

Verse 5; many will come claiming to be a ‘Messiah’ and lead many astray.

Verse 6; there will be wars.

Verse 7; there will be famines, plagues and earthquakes all over the world.

Verse 8; that is just the beginning.

Verse 9; Jewish people and Christians will be hated, persecuted and murdered.

Verse 10; many Christians (especially those who have been misled by the ‘rapture theory’ and who are waiting for a ‘rapture’ that will never come) will stumble and fall away from the faith, will hate each other and in their disillusionment, will betray genuine Christians.

Verse 11; false prophets will rise and deceive many and lead them astray.

Verse 12; the love of Christians will grow cold because of increased lawlessness and sin.

Verse 13; only those Christians who endure to the end will be saved.

Verse 14; the full Gospel of the Kingdom will finally be preached in all the world.

Verse 21; there will be great distress.

Verse 24; even Christians will be deceived and led astray.

Verse 25; See, Jesus has warned us about all this beforehand!!!

Verse 27; Jesus will come as quickly as a bolt of lightning.

Verses 29 to 31; immediately after the tribulation, then the sign of the Son of Man will appear, then He will send His angels to gather His elect.

Christians take note: Jesus will not come and gather His elect until after the tribulation. Not pre-tribulation, not mid-tribulation but after, and when Jesus says after, He means after. That verse blows the rapture theory away. If you are waiting to be raptured off and saved from the tribulation, it is likely you will be so disillusioned and disappointed you could become one of the people Jesus mentioned in verse 10. We have been warned. Only God’s special people who withstand the pressure of the great tribulation will be saved. We are saved now, but to stay saved we must endure to the end. That is we must endure until the last day, and that will be the first resurrection, not a rapture (John 11:24).

Another extremely serious error being taught in churches today is the ‘Replacement Theology’. That error teaches that God has set Israel aside in favour of the church and the church is now the ‘new’ Israel. There is nothing in Scripture that can justify that theory. It is totally anti-Semitic. The church will never replace Israel. ‘Has God totally rejected His people? Of course not!’ (Romans 11:1). These erroneous teachings can only survive because many Christians rarely read or study their Bibles and thus never question these wrong teachings. Indeed, they learn verses by rote but never learn what they mean. They depend on their preacher, pastor, Sunday school teacher or a book. Without balancing what we learn by studying the Bible, we can

easily be deceived. If people read their Bibles carefully, they would never believe in the rapture or the replacement theory. They are both contrary to Scripture. Believing in these theories brings confusion and there is much confusion regarding these erroneous doctrines. Each Christian has a personal responsibility to exercise discernment. We cannot always leave it to somebody else. We are to, 'Test all things and abstain from evil' (1 Thessalonians 5:21 & 22). There are also great responsibilities on church leaders. All church leaders are held accountable by God for the people to whom they minister and more especially, the teachers of the Word (James 3:1). Here is a challenge to church leaders. If you are not qualified to lead God's people in this end of times, if you do not have a good knowledge of Scripture, understanding, discernment, a sense responsibility and authority then it would be safer to retire from leadership. You could be piling up condemnation upon yourself. In the day of Judgement, you will be called to account by God for the people you have led. If you mislead them doctrinally, then scripturally, woe unto you. Leadership is a solemn responsibility.

To be one of God's special people, one of His chosen ones, is an enormous responsibility. Our lives have to mirror God's love, His holiness, His kindness, His life, without being proud or judgemental. When we walk the Walk with the Lord, we can challenge others to do the same, in love and without any pride or judgement. Grace teaches us how to shun evil. We are to warn people with full authority from God, to encourage others to live as God's special people. We are also told by doing this we will save ourselves and those who hear us (1 Timothy 4:16). We need to show believers how to be clothed in pure linen so we can all be made ready for the Lamb's supper. The Bible tells us, 'Glory, honour and peace go to every person who does good, to the Jewish person first and then to the Gentile' (Romans 2:10).

Amen and God bless you.

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