

Session 02 Israel - Chosen People

This lies at the roots of everything to do with Israel, cutting across entrenched beliefs and attitudes about justice, equality, and "human rights". There is a **sense of outrage**, sometimes suppressed but also sometimes expressed in **animosity** and even outright **anti-Semitism**. It may conceal a **resentment against a Sovereign God** Who makes choices and does not fit the popular profile, an expression of a **rebellious human spirit**.

The whole **mystery** of the sovereignty of God can be encapsulated in one question, "**Why did God choose Abraham?**" - not the purpose of the choice but the particular individual chosen, Josh. 24:1-3, Acts 7:2-3 God continued to choose - Isaac, not Ishmael, Gen. 17:15-22, Jacob, not Esau, Gen. 25:21-23. Mal. 1:1-5.

The Ishmaelites, Judges 8:24, and the Edomites, Psalm 137:7, Obadiah 1-21, became enemies of Israel; they are mentioned together in a confederation of nations attacking Israel, Psalm 83:6.

God's choice continues to irk and irritate down to the present time.

Of course there was also a purpose in relation to the whole world, Gen. 12:1-3. Israel was chosen in order to be a blessing to the nations, and continues to do so, against a background of envy and resentment.

The choice of Israel was confirmed at Mount Sinai. Exodus 19:3-6. They, in turn, accepted the choice v7-8. It was based not only in the call of Abraham but also in **God's sovereign act of redemption**. Why did God choose the nation of Israel? Deut. 7:6-11 - **His sovereign love** and, so that they would live as a special people.

Being a chosen people has never been easy - a burden as well as a blessing, privilege with boundaries and responsibilities. The subsequent history of Israel is largely the **conflict between their status as a chosen people and their desire to be like the nations** in political/social structure, 1Sam. 8:4-7, and worship, v8.

They broke themselves on that rock; **God would not allow them that option**, Ezek. 20:32-38.

The Babylonian exile was His answer.

Even in exile they were a people apart, looking to Jerusalem as home, Psalm 137:4-6.

In **exile/Diaspora** they maintained their particular identity through their distinctive customs and practices, e.g. the B'nei Manasseh in N. India, often to the annoyance of the host community, Esther 3:5-8. In "**Christian**" **Europe** they were forcibly segregated in **ghettos** and excluded from agriculture and many trades, resulting in poverty but also maintaining distinctiveness. In some western countries they chose the route of **assimilation**, identifying with the host nation and becoming disproportionately successful in banking, science, and the arts, resulting in envy and distrust.

Events always happened to break the illusion of acceptance - e.g. the Dreyfuss Affair in France that gave rise to the Zionist Movement, and the rise of the Nazi party in Germany. These, together with the pogroms in East Europe and Russia, led to the conclusion that **the only solution was to live as a Jewish people in their ancient homeland**.

They were **chosen in order to be a testimony to the nations** concerning the One True God Who is sovereign over the earth, Ex. 9:16, 34:10, Josh. 4:24, 1Kings 8:41-43, 54-61, 10:1-9, Psalm 96 etc.

They were **chosen as the vehicle to transmit the promised Seed**, Gen. 3:15 - this is the key theme in chapters 12-50, with its final resolution in the incarnation of Jesus, Rom. 9:3-5, Acts 3:25-26, Luke 1:67-79, 2:25-32.

Are they still a chosen people? Jeremiah 31:35-37, 33:23-26, Luke 13:34-35, Acts 3:18-21, Romans 11:25-36.