

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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WHOM DOES GOD CLAIM AS HIS PEOPLE TODAY?

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For decades, the nation of Israel and the United States of America have been allies. This union has partly been based upon the concept that Israel today is a nation made up of God's special people. Therefore, a nation who advertises, “In God we trust” should act favorably toward such people. Religious leaders, who have had the ear of our Presidents, have influenced foreign policy by impressing upon the minds of our leaders that God will bless those who bless His people, and will curse those who curse His people (Gen. 12:3).

While the Israelites you read about in the Bible were God's people and distinguished from all other nations, the Scriptures teach that all today who are in Christ, regardless of nationality, are the people of God.

The same terminology describing the Israelites of old is used to describe the New Testament Christians. For example, God commanded the Israelites in the Old Testament to keep His commandments with these promises: “...then shall ye be my own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: and

ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 19:5-6). Peter, inspired by God, uses the same terms to describe those today who belong to Christ: “Ye also, as living stones are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (I Peter 2:5, 9).

In 750 B.C., Hosea prophesied of those who were not God's people, but would be called the people of God (Hosea 2:23). The prophecy was fulfilled when both Jew and Gentile heeded the call of the Gospel of Christ. Paul writes, “Even us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles? As he saith also in Hosea, I will call that my people, which was not my people; and her beloved, that was not beloved. And it shall be, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called sons of the living God

(Romans 9:24-25). Referring to this same prophecy, Peter adds, “who in time past were no people, but how are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (I Peter 2:10).

While the Jewish nation of Israel was set apart from other nations in the Old Testament, it was to fulfill the broader plan of redeeming man from sin. From Israel would come the promised Messiah, Jesus the Christ, who gave his life to redeem all men from sin. Those who heeded the call of the gospel with its mercy of forgiveness through Christ, became the sons of the living God and are the people of God today.

God does not recognize two favored groups today. Christians are the “Israel of God” today, regardless of their physical background (Galatians 6:16). Paul writes, “There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male or female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise” (Galatians 3:28-29). God's people today are not *physical* Israel, but *spiritual* Israel.