

"THE ISRAEL OF GOD"

**"Ye 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 marvelous light."
– 1 PET. 2:9.**

IN OUR text the Apostle Peter is pointing out the fact that the Church of Christ is separate and distinct from all other people. For many centuries before our Lord came, the Jews had understood that they were God's people. He had made a special Covenant with them through Moses, which constituted them His people. He had also made certain promises to them dependent on their keeping of the Law. Thus they were His chosen – heirs of certain special promises that were conditioned upon their obedience, and of certain other promises that were stated without specified conditions. God had also promised to make a New Covenant with them, to give them a new heart, to take away their stoniness of heart, etc. But after the First Advent a different arrangement began.

The Apostle is directing attention to the new feature of God's Plan – that during the Gospel Age He is calling out a special people. There will be no competition between the two classes – the new nation and the nation of Israel – for the promises given to Israel after the flesh were *earthly*, and the promises given to Israel after the spirit are *spiritual*. The *Jews* were a "peculiar people" (Deut. 14:2), a special people whom God had separated from the world; they were a chosen generation, or race. They were the generation, or race, of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. This special generation was recognized of God as His people, Jews, Israelites, through the Law Covenant, as well as through the preceding promises God had made to Abraham.

But since Pentecost God has started this other work in the world – another generation – peculiar, separate, selected for a particular purpose. And this generation will all be holy – there will be none but holy ones in it! The other nation had a priesthood, but this new people is a *whole nation* of priests. We see how this description applies to the Church. The Apostle Paul points out that while Aaron and his sons were typical in some respects, yet they did not typify all the features of God's Plan. They typified how Jesus would die – as a Sacrifice – how all His associates would be sacrificers. But Aaron and his sons did not typify the still higher priesthood which God had in mind when He established the Levitical priesthood. This higher Order of Priests was typified by Melchizedek, the king-priest. – Hebrews 6:20.

CHURCH'S FUTURE TWO-FOLD OFFICE

Jesus is this great antitypical Royal, or Kingly, Priest, and His Church is the Body of this antitypical Melchizedek. Before the new Order can reign as kings, and before they can serve as Priests, they must go through a certain process. The members of this Body of Christ must be first generated. It is a *new race* – all are begotten of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit at the time of His consecration, and there became a New Creature, spirit-begotten, so also the Church, those who are to walk in His steps, must first make a full consecration before this new generative power will begin to operate in them.

This power began to operate in Jesus at His begetting, and completed its work in His resurrection. And so with us: This power will complete its work in us when we have proven our loyalty even unto death. When this **[R5461 : page 151]** work has been accomplished in all of the Priesthood class, then they will be of the Royal Priesthood indeed, on the Heavenly plane. This power of the Holy Spirit is not only a generating, or begetting, power, but an anointing power. And the anointing is not only to a priestly office,

but also to a kingly office. This New Creation are a holy nation in the sense that they are representatives of a special Government, a Divine Government.

THE HOLY NATION – TYPE AND ANTITYPE

Israel purposed to be a holy nation, and in a typical way they were a holy nation. But in a broad sense, the Church constitutes the holy nation – separate and distinct from humanity. We are a separate nation in every sense of the word – living in the midst of people of the world. We keep *our* laws and also *their* laws. We are obedient to the "powers that be," realizing that the Lord has permitted these and wishes us to be subject to them, wherever our consciences will not be sacrificed. The Lord tells us that as representatives of His Kingdom we are to make known His Message. He tells us that the world is in a rebellious condition because they have become blinded by the Adversary.

And so He sends us as His ambassadors to tell men of His goodness, His Plan, which He purposes to work out, that the hearts of those who have an ear to hear His Message may turn to the Lord. He tells us not to expect many to hear this Message; for they will be so deaf and blind that they cannot understand. But He assures us that by and by their blindness will be taken away, and they will be ready for what He has for them.

The world does not understand us – they do not know that we belong to a different Kingdom; but we understand them. As the Apostle points out, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things." But they *cannot* understand, because no man can understand beyond his mental status, so to speak. We who have been begotten of the Holy Spirit still understand the *natural* things, but the natural man does not understand the spiritual things – "neither *can* he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"; "they are foolishness unto him." So we dwell in the midst of a perverse race, or generation,

fallen into sin for six thousand years. As our Lord declared, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." – John 17:16.

OUR PRESENT GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE

And we are a peculiar people in the sight of the Lord. This word *peculiar* signifies a *separate* people – implying that God had done something special for us. The Lord Jesus has purchased us. His merit – the purchase-price – has been applied on our behalf. The only ones for whom this purchase-price has as yet been applied are the spirit-begotten ones. The Apostle's Message is to these. What object had God in selecting this peculiar people? It was that we might "show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." Is God proud, or vain, that He wishes His praises to be shown forth? Oh, no! God wishes His praises to be known because His praises will show to His creatures the great blessings He has provided for them.

If we go out and tell men that "God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," we are showing forth His praises. We are not making *God* happy by so doing – He was already happy. But we are in this doing a great favor to the people who hear: we are telling them that God will bring them back again into His favor; that He will remove the curse. So, then, it is a great privilege now to tell forth the praises of God! But alas! not very many have the ear to hear; yet by our zeal in showing forth the Master's praises, we are doing all that we can to help men back to God. **[R5461 : page 152]**

The greater work by and by will be the work of the Kingdom in ruling mankind, in overthrowing sin, in instructing and healing the people, bringing them into harmony with their Creator. And this will require a thousand years for its accomplishment. This glorious work will be ours! How wonderful it will be to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord – to be higher than angels!

We shall be next to Jesus, as He will be next to the Father – "far above angels, principalities and powers and every name that is named."

"BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH"

But it is not only the honor that we should seek, but also the privilege of service God is pleased to give this class; the privilege of opening all the deaf ears, of awakening the whole world, to see, to know, to understand our God, to realize that the knowledge of the Lord is to fill the whole world – "for the earth shall be *full* of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" – *ocean deep!* (Isa. 11:9.) That glorious work of the future shall be done only by those who have proved themselves wholly loyal to God. If we are careless or indifferent about telling forth the good Message and showing forth His praises, we shall show that we are not worthy of the Kingdom. Those who prove loyal and faithful to the end will be the ones whom the Lord will exalt by and by.

And in doing this, God has been merely carrying out a course which men have imitated. God laid His plans long before men were born; nevertheless, wise men instinctively follow certain great principles. Napoleon is said to have directed that the various men who were faithful to him be made princes in the countries he conquered. Our Lord says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10.) So we have from every standpoint the greatest encouragement to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." This Scripture implies that we realize we were once in darkness, and that we know we are now in the light.

Comparatively few have had this experience. Those who have been raised out of ignorance and sin into a heart appreciation of God's Plan are the ones referred to here. They could not get this light, except by being begotten of the Holy Spirit and becoming members of this holy nation, this peculiar people. And we cannot

do the world greater good than by telling them of God's great favor, and thus helping them also out of darkness into the light. The light is given us that we may let it shine. May we be enabled to sing from our hearts:

"All for Jesus, all for Jesus –
All my being's ransomed powers;
All my thoughts and words and doings,
All my days and all my hours!"

WE ARE NOT OUR OWN

In Titus 2:14, St. Paul sets forth a similar thought: "A peculiar people, zealous of good works." The people here referred to by him are the saints of God, those who are waiting for the fulfilment of God's promises – for those things which were to be brought to them at the coming (during the *parousia* – presence) of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These are the people who realize that they have been purchased with the precious blood. Some translators render 1 Pet. 2:9 "A *purchased* people, zealous of good works." The Lord's people are a people who have been redeemed, purchased. Whatever they were through the fall, they have been redeemed from that condition. St. Paul, in recounting certain sins, said, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified." – 1 Cor. 6:9-11.

The thought in Titus 2:14 is much the same as in the other. Ye are a peculiar people, a people bought back from Sin and Death, and all such are "peculiar," different from the remainder of mankind. Amongst mankind, in Christendom, we find *some* that are *vicious*, and even amongst the *heathen* we find *noble* people. But these peculiar people of whom St. Paul wrote, are different from all others – they are New Creatures in Christ.

To these, "old things have passed away, and all things have become new." They have new hopes and new aims. They are hoping to attain the highest position offered to any in the Universe; namely, to be made associates in the Government of Messiah. These are very wonderful hopes. And the possession of these hopes by faith constitutes them different and peculiar, separate and distinct from all other people.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PECULIAR PEOPLE

While others seek the emoluments and distinctions of the present time, these count all the things of this world as loss and dross, in view of the wonderful things that God has set before their minds. They have seen the "pearl of great price," and have given their all to purchase it. They see that the Kingdom of God is the most valuable thing that is obtainable now or ever will be attainable. They have recognized the terms upon which this Kingdom-Pearl may be obtained and are seeking to make good the purchase. The terms are self-sacrifice, faithfulness to God at any cost, and patient endurance under adverse conditions, even unto the end.

These peculiar people are seeking to accomplish this work in themselves, because they see that these are the most gracious characteristics and qualities that can be imagined. Hence they are doubly solicitous; they are *zealous of good works*. They love to see others good and happy, and they love to spread the knowledge of God. They love the things that God delights in, because they have the Spirit of Christ. They are interested in reforms [R5462 : page 152] – social reform, temperance reform, every kind of reform; but this does not mean that they will engage in these reforms. The same man cannot be a great preacher, a successful farmer, a successful lawyer, etc. If he be a great farmer, he must give up the other things to a large extent. Or if he be a great preacher, he will have to give up, for the most part, other things. Yet he may have *pleasure* in them *all*.

And so with these peculiar people: they have one particular work given them of the Father. They recognize that this work is most important to be done, hence they cannot give their attention to political reform, social reform, or other reform, outside of their own work. For this reason they are called *theorists* instead of *practical* people. Nevertheless they have the most practical plan of all; for *God's Plan* is of all plans the *most practical*. These people, in becoming co-workers, are taking the wisest course. But they do not find fault with others. They see that the only ones who can grasp these things are those who have the eyes to see and the ears to hear; they know that others cannot go beyond what they see. The peculiarities of these "peculiar people" extend to all the affairs of life.

WHAT CONSTITUTE GOOD WORKS

This class of people are wise enough to know that all the Truth even should not be mentioned at once. The Master said to those who had been His close followers for three and a half years, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." (John 16:12.) The Lord's people are eager to do good, but in the way that will be the most effective, and in the way **[R5462 : page 153]** that will not stumble others. The good works, then, that this peculiar people are zealous of are the works of God. As Jesus said, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me." – John 9:4.

The world cannot appreciate this, not having the Spirit of God, but more the spirit of the Adversary. The world are walking in the way of slander and hypocrisy, more or less. Jesus said, when speaking to the Pharisees, "Ye are of your father, the Devil." (John 8:44.) And when Jesus walked in the way of God, His course was a condemnation to them. Therefore Jesus declared, "The darkness hateth the light," and He forewarned us that it would be the same all the way down through the Age. He warned His followers that

they would suffer the same persecution He had suffered. But the Master urged that they be zealous for the Truth – solicitous for it.

Since God has called us to good works, we are to show great zeal, even though it bring upon us the envy and hatred and opposition of others. We are to rejoice, even if we are called to suffer persecution for His sake. And though the world does not appreciate these good works now, they will see and understand by and by, in their day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:12.) They will see that God's Plan was the best plan. The Church glorified will be the channel for blessing the world in general.

Only this peculiar people can now understand these things. Jesus said unto His disciples, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them [the multitudes who went to hear Him] it is not given....Therefore speak I to them in parables; because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand." (Matt. 13:11,13.) Only those who have come into this special relationship *can* understand. "The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence Him, and He will show them His Covenant." – Psa. 25:14.

We find a great many who gladly accept the Truth, and then seem to forget that the only way they can make *progress* in the Truth is to consecrate themselves to God. If they fail to make consecration, they *must* fail to make progress. We should be sure that we give people the right thought along this line. Only those who thus become God's "peculiar people, zealous of good works," can *inherit the Kingdom.*

=====