

The Children of Abraham



SABBATH—MAY 1

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Ezekiel 16:8; Deuteronomy 28:1, 15; Jeremiah 11:8; Genesis 6:5.

MEMORY VERSE: “But God chose you to be his people. You are royal priests [religious leaders]. You are a holy nation [people from the same country]. You are God’s special treasure. You are all these things so that you can give him [God] praise. God brought you out of darkness [sin] into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV).



“The clock stopped at exactly 8:45 A.M.”

“**THE CLOCK** in the window of a jewelry shop stopped. The clock stopped at exactly 8:45 A.M. Many townspeople depended on this clock. On the morning that the clock stopped, businesspeople looked in the window of the shop. When they saw the clock, they thought it was only 8:45 A.M. Children on their way to school also looked at the clock. The children thought that they had lots of time to play before school started. Many people were late that morning. All because one small clock in the window of the jewelry shop stopped.”—C. L. Paddock, *God’s Minutes* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1965), page 244, adapted.

This story shows us how Israel failed to do the job God gave them. God put Israel in the middle of many different countries. God wanted Israel to be the same as a spiritual “clock” that showed people their need of God. But Israel was the same as the clock in the jewelry shop. Just as the clock stopped showing time, Israel stopped showing people who God was. But not everyone in Israel failed. Back then, God had people who were loyal to Him. This week, we will learn about the people who follow God in every age.

CHOSEN BY GOD (Deuteronomy 7:6)

“You are a holy nation [people from the same country]. The LORD your God has set [separated] you apart for himself. He has chosen you to be his special treasure. He chose you out of all the nations on the face [from every part] of the earth to be his people” (Deuteronomy 7:6, NIV).

The Lord chooses the Hebrew people to be His special people. God wants His people to teach other people on the earth about God. Do you see the word written as “special” in Deuteronomy 7:6, NIV? In the Hebrew, this word is “**segullah**.” “**Segullah**” also can be written as “property that is worth a lot.” “**Segullah**” can be written as “special treasure,” too, as the verse above shows us. “**Segullah**” shows us an important idea about the choice that God makes. His choice shows us His loving-favor. The people of Israel do not do anything special to make God choose them. They cannot. Humans cannot do anything to earn favor from God. The loving-favor of God is a gift.

Read Ezekiel 16:8. How does this verse help explain why the Lord chooses Israel?

“Why does the Lord choose Israel to be His special people? Israel is a small people group. They are not famous or important. Israel does not do anything special to earn the favor of God. . . . The real cause for this choice is love. God loves Israel. By this choice, God keeps His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. . . . God makes Israel free from slavery in Egypt. This freedom shows Israel that God is powerful. Israel needs to understand everything that God has done for them and His love for them. So, when Israel stops loving God back, their decision shows their awful behavior.”—J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1974), pages 130, 131, adapted.

God plans for Israel to be His special religious leaders and kings. As kings, Israel must win the war against sin. As religious leaders, Israel must give God praise and offerings. God wants Israel to be His living examples on this earth. Then they will show other people about God and Bible truth.



As religious leaders, Israel must give God praise and offerings.

LAND DEAL (Genesis 35:12)

God makes Abraham a promise. God will give a country to the future children of Abraham. But God tells Abraham that 400 years must pass before his future children can own the land (Genesis 15:13, 16). God makes this promise again to Isaac and Jacob. Later, Joseph talks about this promise right before he dies (Genesis 50:24). God starts to keep His promise to Israel in the days of Moses and Joshua. Moses tells Israel the command of God: “ ‘Look, I am giving you this land. Go and take it’ ” (Deuteronomy 1:8, ERV).



Sin is the same as water, a clock, and a tree.

Read Deuteronomy 28:1, 15. These verses hint about a promise from God to Israel. What is it? The answer is that God will give the land to Israel as part of the special agreement. An agreement shows us that all the people in the agreement must do their part. What must Israel do as part of the agreement?

The first part of Deuteronomy 28 shows the blessings that God will give Israel if they follow His plan. The last part of the chapter shows us what will happen to Israel if they do not follow God. God will allow curses to happen to them. “These curses happen mostly because Israel sins against God. God allows sin to grow until it becomes a curse to His people. Then His people can see that sin is very evil. . . . ‘If a man does things to please his sinful [full of sin] old self, his soul will be lost.’ (Galatians 6:8, NLV). Sin is the same as water, a clock, and a tree. Water will flow down a mountain and not stop until it reaches a lower place. A clock will not stop ticking until its battery runs out. A tree that someone does not chop down will grow fruit. In the same way, sin must run down, run out, and grow its awful fruit. These three things ‘only bring death’ (Romans 6:21, ICB).”—*The Pulpit Commentary: Deuteronomy*, H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, editors (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), volume 3, page 439, adapted.

God promises many times to give Israel land as part of His agreement. But Israel must keep their part of the bargain, too. If they do not, then God cannot keep His promises to them. The Lord warns His people about what will happen if they disobey Him (read Leviticus 26:27–33). The warning is clear. God will take the land from His people.

ISRAEL AND THE COVENANT (Jeremiah 11:8)

“ ‘ “But your ancestors [people from long ago] did not listen to [obey] me. They were stubborn and did what their own evil hearts wanted. The agreement says that bad things will happen to them if they don’t obey. So I made all the bad things happen to them. I commanded them to obey the agreement, but they did not” ’ ” (Jeremiah 11:8, ERV).

The Lord says that He will make “ ‘ “all the bad things happen” ’ ” in the agreement. We mostly think about the agreement as something that offers us only good things, right? But the agreement has a good side and a bad side. We see this same important rule in the special agreement with Noah. God offers to save Noah from the Flood. But Noah must obey God. Then Noah will get the blessings that come with the agreement. But what if Noah does not obey? Then bad things will happen.

Compare Jeremiah 11:8 with Genesis 6:5. What is the same about both verses? What do these verses show us about how important it is for us to control our thoughts?

Sadly, the Bible shows us that Israel often does not obey God. So, God judges them. His punishments cause Israel to turn from sin. They obey God for a little while. But then they sin again. The only time Israel controls all the land that God promises them is during the time when David and Solomon are king. But that is only for a short time.

Jeremiah shows us how much the people of God turn away from Him: “ ‘Suppose [what if] a man divorces his wife. What if she then marries another man? Should her first husband return [go back] to her again? If he does, won’t the land become completely [fully] “unclean” [full of guilt and sin]? People of Israel, you have lived like [the same as] a prostitute [someone who has sex for pay]. You have loved many other gods. So do you think you can return [come back] to me now?’ ” ’ announces the LORD” (Jeremiah 3:1, NIV). This verse shows us that God wants a personal connection with His people. The special agreement is the same as a marriage. That is why God uses marriage as a word picture. It shows us the reason that Israel turns away from God: they broke their love connection with God. This broken friendship causes them to disobey God. Their disobedience finally causes God to punish them.



God wants a personal connection with His people.

**THE SMALL GROUP THAT LOVES AND OBEYS GOD
(Isaiah 4:3)**

As we saw yesterday, Bible history shows us that Israel keeps turning away from God. So, God punishes them. Then the people turn back to God. This same thing happens again and again. At the same time, what hope for the people of God do we see in the verses below?

Isaiah 4:3 _____

Micah 4:6, 7 _____

Zephaniah 3:12, 13 _____

God has a plan for Israel. But God cannot fully bless His people because they disobey God so much. At the same time, the plan of God happens fully in the lives of a few people who are loyal to Him. This small group is named a remnant. A remnant is a piece of cloth left over from a larger roll of cloth. A remnant also is a word picture that shows us a small group of people in the Bible who are loyal to God. This small group is left over from a larger group.

God always has a remnant that He chooses to be His from a larger group. The larger group says that they love God and are loyal to Him. But their hearts are not loyal. Their lives show it. The remnant, or small group, that God chooses is loyal to God. God has the same plan for this small group that He has for all Israel. He wants them to announce to other people Bible truth. He wants them to “tell the nations [people from other countries] about my glory” (Isaiah 66:19, NIV). Then other people will join Israel when they “worship the King [God]” (Zechariah 14:16, NIV). In Bible times, God has people who do their best to keep the agreement with God (read 1 Kings 19:14–18). Sure, this small group of loyal people suffers along with the larger group when they are all taken away as prisoners to a faraway land. But God will keep His promise to His loyal ones. He will give them the gift of everlasting life.

Read John 10:27, 28. What is Jesus saying here? How do these promises help us better understand the idea of a remnant? Why will God always have a remnant or small group of people who are loyal to Him?



A remnant is a word picture that shows us a small group of people in the Bible who are loyal to God.

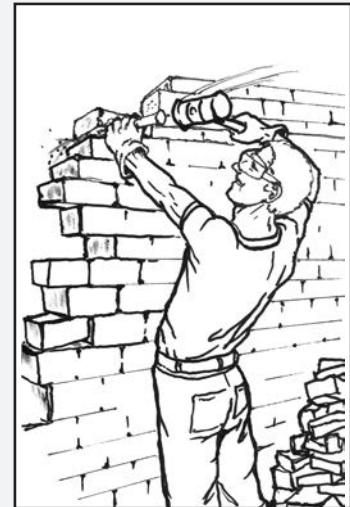
SPIRITUAL ISRAEL (Galatians 3:26–29)

Israel makes many mistakes and fails many times in the Bible. But the Lord is not done with Israel. He does not give up His plan of wanting a group of loyal people who serve Him. The Old Testament talks about a future time when God will have this loyal group. This group is named spiritual Israel. Spiritual Israel will be made up of Jews and non-Jews. Together, these loyal ones will preach the Good News about Jesus everywhere on earth. This group is known as the early church in New Testament times.

Read Galatians 3:26–29. Then answer the questions:

- 1. What promise does Paul talk about in Galatians 3:29?**
- 2. What is the most important thing that makes a person worthy of these promises? (Read Galatians 3:26.)**
- 3. A “wall” separates people on this earth. This wall is a word picture for the different things that divide us: male or female, Jew or non-Jew, rich or poor. Why does Paul “break” this wall?**
- 4. What does it mean that we are “all the same in Christ [Jesus]”? (Galatians 3:28, ERV).**
- 5. Read Romans 4:16, 17. How do these verses help us understand what Paul says in Galatians 3:26–29?**

“God makes a promise of land to Abraham and his future children. This gift includes not only the land of Canaan but also the whole earth. That is why Paul says, ‘Abraham and his family received [got] a promise. God promised that Abraham would [will] receive [get] the world [the whole earth]. It would not come to him because he obeyed the law. It would come because of his faith, which made him right [free from guilt] with God’ (Romans 4:13, [NirV]). The Bible teaches that God will keep His promises to Abraham. Through Jesus, we will get the gift of everlasting life [1 Peter 1:4] and an earth that is made free from the curse of sin.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 170, adapted. This promise will happen fully when the saved ones live on the new earth forever with Jesus (Daniel 7:27).



A “wall” separates people on this earth.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Vineyard of the Lord,” pages 15–22; “Hope for the Heathen,” pages 367–378; and “The House of Israel,” pages 703–721, in *Prophets and Kings*.

“In the eyes of God, we are all the same. He does not respect some people more than other people because they have a lot of money or were born in a special place or come from an important family. God made everyone. So, we are all one family. Jesus came to destroy every wall of separation. Jesus came to open the temple in heaven. He wants every person to come to God freely. His love is big, deep, and full. His love reaches everyone, no matter where he or she is. The love of Jesus makes men free from Satan who have been tricked by his lies. Jesus helps them to come close to the throne of God. A rainbow is around this throne. This rainbow shows us that God will keep His promises. In Jesus, we are all the same: the Jew is not different or better than the Greek. The slave is not different or better than the person who is free.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pages 369, 370, adapted.

Read 1 Peter 2:9 to learn about the four names that Peter gives to the church. Most of these names are shown in these Old Testament verses about Israel: Exodus 19:6 and Isaiah 43:20. What do each of these names show us about the special connection between the church and God? (Here is one example: the name “chosen people” in 1 Peter 2:9 [ERV] shows us that God chose the church and has special work for it to do.)



“The love of Jesus makes men free from Satan who have been tricked by his lies. Jesus helps them to come close to the throne of God.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In Bible times, the religious leaders killed animals and gave them to God as gifts. These animals showed the future death of Jesus on the cross. As religious leaders for Jesus, what gifts should we bring to God that show what Jesus has done for us? (Read 1 Peter 2:5 to help you answer the question.)
- ② How can we be separate from the people on the earth and share the Good News with them at the same time? How do the experience of Israel and the example of Jesus help answer the question?

Summary: Who are the people of God? They are the ones who live by faith in a special connection with Him. They show the people on this earth the love of God. They invite other people to accept His gift of saving them from sin and to come follow Him.

WHEN GOD LEADS ALL THE WAY

Dr. Hernando Diaz needs a house and a job. He has not worked as a doctor for two years because his two-year-old son Samuel is sick.

Hernando moves his family from northern Colombia to Medellin. Medellin is the second biggest city in Colombia. Hernando hopes to find a hospital to help his son who has kidney problems. Hernando and his family live at the hospital for one year. But now Hernando needs a house for Erica, his wife, their son Samuel, and their 11-year-old son, Immer. Hernando cannot afford a house near the hospital. So, Hernando prays. Then he finds a room inside a house. The owner rents rooms to students. Hernando asks for a room.

The owner says, "I have one empty room. A student already paid me for it."

Hernando says, "God brought me to you because I need that room."

The owner gives Hernando the room for free for six months. This kind act helps Hernando feel that God is leading him.

Immer has lived with family members in another city for one year. Hernando wants to put Immer in a Christian school near the hospital. A hospital worker hears about the need of Hernando. So, she tells him, "I know a good Christian school nearby. My brother sent his daughter there. The school is Seventh-day Adventist."

Hernando knows nothing about the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But he visits the school and likes it. So, he sends Immer. Shortly after classes start, Immer tells the teacher his father is a doctor. The teacher says, "The Adventist Health Center needs a doctor badly. Tell your father to go there to see about the job."

Immer tells his father. Then Hernando talks with the teacher. Hernando explains, "I need a job. But I cannot work normal hours because I need to be with my baby."

"Do not worry," the teacher says. "Just go to the center."

The doctor at the health center calls Hernando to set up a time to meet. Hernando explains his need to work around taking care of his baby. The doctor offers Hernando the job on the phone. "We will accept your schedule." The doctor also offers to help Hernando fill out medical paperwork for Samuel.

Hernando is so grateful. He joins the medical team at the Adventist Health Center. He also visits the Adventist church. There he learns more about God and His love. Hernando and his family get baptized. Today, Samuel is a healthy eight-year-old boy. Hernando works full-time at the Adventist Health Center. He has led more than 100 patients and other people to Jesus. Hernando believes God led him all the way.

INSIDE
Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Hernando cannot find a house near the hospital that he can afford. So, Hernando prays.

