

# Israelites by Character

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**M**ANY people think that modern Israel (according to the flesh) will play a decisive role in the last day events. They make a distinction regarding physical lineage. But while physical lineage plays a part in passing truth from one generation to another, the flesh in and of itself contains nothing of value in God's sight, being corrupted by sin. Both Jewish flesh and Gentile flesh are equally corrupted,

### **Romans 3**

<sup>23</sup> For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

## **Why Jesus Was Rejected**

When Jesus Christ appeared on earth, the question of Jewish flesh and Jewish superiority over other flesh, was uppermost in the minds of the people. They expected the Messiah to establish a kingdom like that of David and Solomon: an earthly kingdom. And they would be the co-rulers, and beneficiaries of that kingdom.

But Jesus did not seem to fit that role. They questioned His birth heritage, implying that He was conceived out of wedlock:

### **John 8**

<sup>41</sup> ...Then said they to Him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

They questioned His quiet way of establishing the kingdom:

## **John 7**

<sup>4</sup> For there is no man that does anything in secret, and he himself seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.

They questioned his low estate and poverty:

## **Matthew 13**

<sup>55</sup> Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

<sup>56</sup> And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then has this man all these things?

<sup>57</sup> And they were offended in him.

They questioned why He would not use His miraculous powers to save Himself:

## **Luke 23**

<sup>35</sup> And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

These difficulties were caused by their persistent tendency to glory in their flesh. They would think in their hearts,

“Were not the promises made to Abraham and his seed? Are we not the seed? Doesn't God therefore favor us above all the heathen, and are we not superior to them?”

And they would long for the day when the Messiah would come and free them from the dominion of the heathen Roman empire, which they despised; and would give them their rightful place of superiority. But in God's kingdom, superior places are given to those who have the right character:

## **Psalm 37**

<sup>11</sup> But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

## **1 Corinthians 1**

<sup>26</sup> For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise

men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

<sup>27</sup> But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

<sup>28</sup> And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are:

<sup>29</sup> That no flesh should glory in His presence.

When the Jewish people put confidence in their flesh, they were leaning upon a broken reed, for the power of sin is stronger than the human will and desire. The only source of real holiness and righteousness is the power of God. If this putting of confidence in the flesh was a stumbling block to Israel, are we on safe ground to make the same fleshly distinctions today?

### **What is an Israelite?**

The word “Israel” means “overcomer,” which is what God renamed Jacob into after he wrestled with the angel. It was all about character qualifications. He gained the victory over his own disposition to try and control God’s work, and when he clung to the angel pleading for the blessing, it was given. Even though Esau occupied most of the physical land, and was by birth the eldest, it is clear that the spiritual blessing was on Jacob, after he learned to cling to God instead of trying to gain the blessing by his own craftiness.

The blessings that Jacob pronounced (*Genesis* 49), and many years later, the blessings that Moses pronounced (*Deuteronomy* 33), upon the twelve tribes, are also about character traits. Because of this, any fleshly Gentiles who had the right character (one that God was working on by His Spirit) were easily assimilated into the Jewish nation, and even into the line of the Messiah, such as Rahab, and Ruth.

## **Philippians 2**

<sup>15</sup> That you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

## **Who are Jews? Who are Gentiles?**

Jesus described Nathaniel as...

### **John 1**

<sup>47</sup> ...an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

Character again. He also said:

### **Matthew 3**

<sup>9</sup> God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

All the apostles were from the nation of Israel, and likely most of the people who rose from the graves when Jesus rose, and are now ministering in heaven. Jesus told the apostles:

### **Matthew 19**

<sup>28</sup> You also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And yet they were also the foundation of His church, which is made up of Jews and Gentiles:

### **Ephesians 2**

<sup>19</sup> ...the household of God;

<sup>20</sup> ...built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

The clear line of demarcation is not between fleshly Jew and fleshly Gentile, but between the righteous and the wicked: the one who is spiritually a Jew, and the one who is spiritually a Gentile.

### **1 Samuel 16**

<sup>7</sup> ...man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

The book of James is written:

### **James 1**

<sup>1</sup> ...to the twelve tribes scattered abroad.

Yet there are very few Christians who think it doesn't apply to them.

The apostle Paul compared the fleshly Jews to Ishmael and their city of Jerusalem to Hagar: children of bondage—because of character:

### **Galatians 4**

<sup>24</sup> Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which genders to bondage, which is Hagar.

<sup>25</sup> For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

<sup>26</sup> But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

<sup>27</sup> For it is written, Rejoice, you barren that bear not; break forth and cry, you that travail not: for the desolate has many more children than she which has a husband.

<sup>28</sup> Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

<sup>29</sup> But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

And the “new covenant” which brings freedom, was made...

### **Hebrews 8 [Jeremiah 31:31]**

<sup>8</sup> ...with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;

—yet most Christians will surely claim that they are under the “new covenant.”

Jesus also called the Jewish leaders children of the devil—again based on character:

### **John 8**

<sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.

When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

When Jesus went out of His way to meet the woman from Tyre and Sidon, and told her,

**Matthew 15**

<sup>24</sup> I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,

—He was clearly trying to get His disciples to see that these Gentile people who had such faith were also “lost sheep of Israel” waiting to be gathered into His fold. Mark though, it was not a new sheepfold that Jesus was bringing them into, but the same fold: “the house of Israel.”

Then there are so many plain statements such as:

**Romans 1**

<sup>16</sup> ...the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

**Galatians 3**

<sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

**Romans 11**

<sup>5</sup> Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

Character, character: all character! Isaiah is also full of statements such as:

**Isaiah 56**

<sup>7</sup> ...my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.

And there are all those marvelous promises in *Isaiah* 60 and 62 about the Gentiles bringing their honor and glory into Jerusalem.

## What Advantage?

What advantage then has the Jew?

### **Romans 3**

<sup>1</sup> What advantage then has the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

<sup>2</sup> Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

### **Romans 9**

<sup>4</sup> To the [Israelites] pertains the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

<sup>5</sup> Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.

Amen.

The main advantage to being a Jew (after the flesh) was that you were exposed to the truth about God's character, as revealed in His word and His dealings with Israel, the way of salvation was plainly pictured in the symbolic services, and the Messiah was to come through that fleshly line. But failure to improve on these opportunities meant you were more guilty than the ignorant Gentile:

### **Romans 2**

<sup>9</sup> Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

<sup>10</sup> But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that works good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

<sup>11</sup> For there is no respect of persons with God.

It almost seems contradictory when it says "there is no respect of persons" and yet the blessings or curses are "to the Jew first." But the reason is simply again based on character. The Jew who is faithful has the advantage of knowing God better, and therefore being able to be a more capable servant of others. And in Christ's kingdom, those who serve the most are the greatest:

## Matthew 23

<sup>11</sup> But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

I'm sure that when God works His final work on the earth, there will be some faithful among the saved who came from Jewish heritage (after the flesh). But like the apostle Paul, they will count this fleshly honor as loss that they may win Christ.

## The Twelve Tribes

Many think that the 144,000 of *Revelation 7* will be made up of physical Jews, because of the reference to the "twelve tribes." But there is no difficulty here provided we understand that character is what counts with God.

If we look at the blessings on the twelve sons of Jacob and their tribes, some are more illustrious than others. The blessings are given according to character. Reuben should have received the "double blessing" given to the firstborn, but he lost it due to his sins, and it was given to Joseph instead, because of his righteousness.

When they were arranged around the sanctuary in the wilderness, after their deliverance from Egypt, the tribes were arranged in groups of 3 on each side of the tabernacle. Each side had a standard (flag) to represent them. So likewise we find the saints in heaven represented by four living creatures (lion, ox, eagle, man). These are definite character types, and it is not so hard to interpret these symbols:

- **Lion:** a bold leader.
- **Ox:** one who is good at bearing burdens, and can endure long, tedious work with patience.
- **Eagle:** one who sees far, who meditates and contemplates and when he is sure of his goal, acts swiftly.
- **The Face of a Man:** one who is sociable, compassionate, merciful, kind.

These compare easily with what men have called the "four



temperaments” or character-types: choleric (the lion), melancholic (the eagle), phlegmatic (the ox), and sanguine (the face of man), a distinction that goes back at least as far as ancient Greece.

The fact that there are 3 tribes under each standard indicate that each primary temperament has a secondary element, made up of one of the other types or standards. So a man may be primarily a lion (leader), but have a secondary trait of an eagle, and so on. So in summation, human character can be so divided into twelve different types. The 144,000 will be comprised of every type of human character possible.

The clear message of this prophecy in *Revelation* is that there is no character so marred but that Christ can redeem it by the power of His Gospel and make it shine again. Christ’s grace makes a level playing field, where the weaker we feel ourselves to be, the more grace is available to us to supply all our need.

Therefore there is no excuse for any of us to fail of reaching the full stature of men and women in Christ. It’s not only for those who have the fortune to be raised in a good family or with a milder set of genes! Divinity, combined with humanity, and working through it, is enabled to do the work of God, and the image of God can be fully restored in humanity by the power of the gospel.

### **Zechariah 12**

<sup>8</sup> In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them.

### **2 Corinthians 12**

<sup>9</sup> And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.