

The Story 2026

Isreal-The People

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

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Today is the third week in a seven-week series that we are doing with the goal of giving you a brief overview of the story of Scripture. I've asked you to lock in for seven weeks. And so if you've missed the first two weeks, that's okay. I encourage you to go online and to watch those so that you can catch up. The first week we spent time in Genesis chapter one talking about the story of creation and how God created everything and understanding that God is the main character in the story.

The second week, we spent time last week talking about Genesis chapter 3, the fall in rebellion of mankind, that because we were given free will, we made the decision to disobey God's commands, which made a chasm between us and God now because of our sin. I've discovered over the last 20-plus years of doing ministry that as I talk with people, the majority of people don't have a good grasp or their minds wrapped around Scripture.

As I ask them why, most people respond by saying, "You know, it is a big book. It's pretty thick. It's intimidating. It's confusing." Some people would say, "It just takes too much time to read. I can't stay focused for that long." Or, "They're just too busy and they have other priorities." And I understand all of those responses. But one of the interesting things that I've discovered over the last 20-plus years is that even though most people haven't read Scripture, they still have a strong opinion about it.

It's interesting to me that they may know bits and pieces, but it's enough for them to still come up with some kind of conclusion in their own mind. And as I mentioned, so this is only going to be seven weeks long. So we're only touching on the very important parts. And I have taken two weeks and we're still only in Genesis chapter three. So we're going to have to pick up the pace, but I intentionally spent that time in Genesis 1, 2, and 3 because it lays the foundation for everything that comes after.

And so it's very important that we understand the beginning of the story. And so today, as we continue, we're going to spend time talking about Israel, God's chosen people. Now, as I use the name Israel, I want you to know that there will be two other names that I use that refer to the same group of people. We call them Israelites. We call them the Jewish people, or we call them the Hebrew people.

All three of those are interchangeable, so I just want you to know that, that if I use one or the other, I'm referring to God's chosen people. And I will explain to you who those people are. Now, yes, God chose the Jewish people, the Israelite people, and sometimes I will talk with individuals. And before you get jealous and you wonder why God chose the Jews and not maybe your background or where you come from, let me assure you that it's not all it's cracked up to be. Let me just explain to you why.

Yes, the Jewish people, the Israelite people, are a special people. The Scripture does say that they are to be a royal priesthood. And yes, they are called to be a holy nation. But when they fail, and they do fail, and they will fail, all of their dirty laundry is recorded for all of time for everyone to read. So just think about that the next time

you think, "Man, I wish I was part of God's chosen people." Just imagine all of your stories of moral failures being recorded for everyone to read and learn about.

This is what it means to be God's chosen people. You see, as we look at our own families, every single one of us has crazy in our family, don't we? We have individuals, we have people, and I always jokingly say, "If you think your family's fairly normal, then you're probably the crazy one." All right? We all have crazy in our family, and you and I should all be glad that everyone doesn't have to know about it, right? That doesn't have to be recorded for all people to read. And so today, we are going to be introduced to God's crazy family.

He had to choose a people group, and he ends up choosing the Israelites. So if you have your Bibles, open to Genesis chapter 12, verse 1. We're going to move fast. I'm not going to be reading a lot of Scripture. I will summarize the story leading us into the Promised Land today. So Genesis chapter 12, verse 1, as we read the story of Abram. So let me pray and then we will jump in. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for today and for the opportunity to gather.

We thank you for your story that is recorded in Scripture. That we can read through your plan as it plays itself out. And we can see certainly themes. And we can see character traits about you. And we also can see character traits about ourselves. I pray that as we read these words and as we study this book, that as Hebrews 4:12 says that the Word of God is living and active, that it truly would be alive and that it would transform our hearts and our lives and our souls.

And that this short seven-week series, at the very least, would intrigue us to dive into it deeper. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen. So I'm obviously skipping a little bit where we left off last week in Genesis chapter 3, going to Genesis 12. So if you want to, I encourage you to go back and read those chapters. But just so you know, in those three chapters, sin continues to get worse. Things go from bad to worse.

It actually gets so bad that God decides to shut down everything in the world with a worldwide flood. And he starts over with a man named Noah in his family. You've probably heard the story. Unfortunately, this plan will not fix the problem because sin followed Noah on the Ark. It doesn't take long to read after the story of Noah when they come off the Ark that you see sin is still present. And so God, from the very beginning, knew that He was going to need to send a Redeemer into the world who could cover sin.

And He has to choose a family through whom that Savior can come. And this is where we arrive to Genesis chapter 12:1. The Lord had said to a man named Abram, "Leave your country, your people, and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you." And this is the promise he makes to Abram, "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse.

And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." So truly, in Genesis chapter 12, we see that God makes a decision. He simply chooses this man named Abram, and he says, "Through you, through your ancestors, through your people, I am going to bless the world." And we need to know that even as we read Genesis chapter 12:1, that God's decision of Abram was fully based on God's love, grace, and mercy, and not on Abram's own merit.

He did nothing to deserve this or earn this favor before God. It was simply God's grace. And so God makes this promise to Abram, and this promise is known as a covenant. And this covenant that God makes with Abram is solely based on who God is, not on who Abram is. He promises Abram three things in Genesis chapter 12. He promises him a land, which we will talk more about next week as we get into the book of Joshua. He promises that he's going to turn him into a great nation.

Abraham, what his name will be turned into, will be the father of a great nation of people, which we will come to know as the Israelites, the Jewish people. And promise number three is that through His offspring, everyone on earth will be blessed. And He is referring to the coming Messiah because Jesus is going to come from the family

line of Abram. The rest of the Old Testament I told you we're going to pick up the pace here. The rest of the Old Testament from Genesis all the way to Malachi will revolve around God's chosen people, the Israelites.

We will study their history. We study their past. We study how they would honor God and then fall from God. We study about how they become a nation. We study about how they go into the land. We study about their kings and their rulers and about how God would have to send other nations against them because of their disobedience. But yet God will remain faithful. We read about the prophets who were Israelites, who were Jewish, that God would send them to His people, to call them back to Himself. The rest of the Old Testament.

In Genesis, we will read the rest of this story going from Abraham to his son, Isaac, from Isaac to Jacob, who would have his name changed to Israel, which is where we get the Israelite name, because after Jacob, we have the 12 tribes, these 12 sons that are born, and we begin to follow the story of Joseph. You see how these are connected? Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and then we follow Joseph, and we get to the end of Genesis, and we see that Joseph, of course, is sold into slavery by his brothers.

We're familiar with that story, so let's make the connection here. Joseph ends up in Egypt. He ends up second in command, second most powerful man in Egypt because of God's grace. It's an amazing story at the end of Genesis. We see that then while he is there, there's a famine that takes place. And so Joseph's brothers and his family, who are the Israelites, end up migrating to Egypt to be saved from the famine, and they end up in the land of Goshen. And then we get into Exodus. And what happens in Exodus?

In Exodus, the nation, the people of Israel, these Jewish people, begin to grow and multiply into a great people group, so much so that the Pharaoh of Egypt, who knew nothing about Joseph, because we're years down the road now, says, "You know what? If we end up in a battle or a fight, these people could turn against us and we would be in trouble." And so they begin to enslave the Jewish people. They end up in bondage in Egypt. And then as we walk through Exodus, God raises up who? Moses. God raises up Moses, and we have this crazy story that takes place.

And Moses ends up coming back, and you have the plagues of Egypt. And finally, Pharaoh says, "Okay, get out of here when you had the tenth plague, and the firstborn son of every person in Egypt is killed." And so they leave, and Moses takes them into the desert, and they're getting ready to enter into the Promised Land. But then we walk through the Book of Exodus, and we find that even after all the miracles and the amazing stuff that God does, these Jewish people begin to complain mere days or weeks after they cross through the Red Sea on the dry ground and they watch Pharaoh's army get destroyed.

As the waters go back on, they begin to complain to Moses, "Why did you bring us out here? Let's go back to Egypt." And so for the next 40 years, they wander in the wilderness, and that takes us to the book of Joshua, which is where we're going to begin next week. But I had to get you the story, okay? This is how they are connected. And so God is making this promise to Abram that He is going to be a people. And when God makes this promise to Abram that He's going to have ancestors that are as numerous as the sand on the sea and the stars in the sky, at the time that he makes that promise to Abram, he doesn't even have any kids.

He's thinking to himself, "How is this supposed to happen? I don't even have any children." And so we follow the twists and turns of their story, and they're certainly far from perfect. But as we look for truths in Scripture, here even in Genesis, as we get this story of Abram and God's chosen people, we see the truth that God has a plan. And there's nothing that we're going to do to stop it. He's going to accomplish His purposes. He is in control. The blueprint has already been laid out, and it's going to be accomplished.

There may be times that God's plan doesn't make any sense. There may be times that you're reading through the story and you think, "This is just a little confusing, but God continues to work." And as we read this and we put ourselves in the story, you and I need to be reminded that God has a plan for us as well. And that even in the

midst of our story, even in the midst of our lives, there's going to be times where it doesn't make any sense, but we must continue to walk in faith. Again, when Abram received his promise, he had no land. He had no children. He had no idea what was in store, but his name would be changed to Abraham. And he was considered a man of faith. Why? Because he trusted in God's promise. And so today, whatever you're going through, whatever part of the story you are in, the question is, do you trust God's promises? Do you trust that he is still in charge? He's still in control, even though there might be times and moments that it doesn't look like it. Maybe there's health issues or relationship issues or financial issues.

All of the struggles that we have in this world and in this life, will you, even in those moments, trust God's promises? And I am reminded of what somebody said to me during a difficult season in my life that I will never forget. God has not taken you this far just to leave you now. You know As you get older and you can look back on your life and you see all the times that God walked through the trials and the tribulations, it continues to build your faith. And so the Israelite says God's chosen people were called to be this royal priesthood.

They were called to be a holy nation. Why? Because God wanted to use them as a people group in order to reveal Himself to the world. He chose them and said, "It is through you." That's what it means to be a priest. You are the person in the middle between the normal person and God. And so you were to be a royal priesthood, a holy nation, that God says, "I want to reveal myself through you to the world." And it's at this moment that we need to make a clarifying statement that being chosen by God implies a higher standard and duty to represent God, not inherent superiority over other people.

Do you hear what I said? Being chosen by God, which I would tell you as followers of God now, we have been adopted into the family of Christ. It means that we are called to a higher standard and duty to represent God, not inherent superiority over other people. The Jews, the Israelites, they were called to live by God's laws and to be a light to the nations. Deuteronomy chapter 7:6 says, "For you are a people wholly to the Lord your God.

For the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be His people, His treasured possession." And so they were given responsibilities. They were given duties. They were supposed to keep and preserve the law. They were called to be this kingdom of priests. They were to bring renown and praise and honor to the name of the Lord. Yahweh. Being called, being treasured, being loved by God doesn't mean that we are better than anyone else. It simply means we have received his favor.

Sometimes I've noticed that we, and by we, I mean believers, can struggle with similar issues as the Israelites, that as we get in conversations with others and as we live our lives, that we can have this pride and come off smug to those around us who don't know Jesus. And even though these words may never come out of our mouths, it's sometimes the way that we act and present ourselves. Things like, I am chosen. I know the truth. Sorry you don't. God is with me. I am special.

And so I think it's important for you and I to learn the lesson from the Israelite people that being adopted into God's family is simply by His grace. And so we get to true statement number two. We are sinners saved by grace. May we never forget that fact. We are sinners saved by grace. And so instead of being prideful, we should be grateful. Instead of expecting special treatment, we should serve others. Instead of trying to change others, we should work on changing ourselves.

Israel gets in a lot of trouble because they forget this often. They think they can go off and do whatever they want because God is going to remain faithful and everything's going to work out. And so they get this sense of pride, smugness that somehow they are better than other people. And so we need to be cautious and always remember that we are sinners saved by grace. And this leads us to the ultimate fulfillment, the ultimate goal of God's promise to Abraham.

The ultimate goal of God's choice of the Jews as His chosen people was to produce the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who would be the Savior of the world. From eternity past, think about this. God knew that He would need to be

born into humanity in order to save us from the spiritually dead condition we were in. And so God had planned from the very beginning to be born into this very small nation, this very small race of people called the Jews.

And the entire Old Testament tells the story of how God set about creating that people group, distinguishing that people group, and preserving that race. Which leads us to true statement number three, which might not be an aha for a lot of you, but for others of you, it may. Jesus was Jewish. This means that he would have looked more like Jerry Seinfeld than Jim Caviesel, if that's how you pronounce his name. He is Jewish.

You see, we have these images and pictures of our head of what Jesus may have looked like from Renaissance art and all of this stuff, but he was Jewish. He decided to enter into his creation in that family line. He was raised in a Jewish family. He understood the Jewish history. He followed the Jewish traditions. And so we are reminded again that God often intentionally chooses the least of these so that He receives the glory. A small nation, a small people group that has a crazy history throughout the world.

And yet still today, isn't it amazing that we don't read stories of the Amorites or the Jebusites or all these other people groups, but who does still exist? The Israelites, the Jewish people, still exist. Why so God can receive the glory? I've often said in my own life, there is no possible answer as to the fact that I would be up here sharing with you other than God. The family I come from, who I am, everything about me.

God chooses the least of these so that He can receive the glory, so that we don't have pride, so that it's impossible to look at God's plan and say, "Well, maybe it was because those people were better or because of this." If you read through the Old Testament, you will easily come to the conclusion that Israel was not some great nation that did everything right. He chose them so that when we look at their story, we would say, "Only God." Now, in this quick overview of talking about the Israelite people, I don't have time to answer a question that often arises when we begin talking about the nation of Israel.

And here is the question that people will often ask me. Is Israel still God's chosen people? So today, is Israel still God's chosen people? And they ask this question because, of course, we get into the New Testament. And in the New Testament, it speaks of all believers. You and I included Gentiles, non-Jewish people, that in Christ, we are now God's chosen people, that we are holy and dearly loved, that you and I are to be a kingdom or a nation of priests to others.

We begin to carry some of those characteristics as his followers. We read in Scripture that you and I are the unnatural branches that have been grafted into the true vine, Jesus Christ. We have been adopted into the family. So does that mean that now we are part of God's chosen people, or is there still something special about the Israelites, about Jewish people that is going to somehow have to do with end times and everything that's going to happen? Are the Israelites still God's chosen people?

Well, I'm going to tell you today, I'm not going to answer that question because we don't have time to get into it. If you want to talk with me later, I would love to. You can have fun debating amongst yourselves about that. But I'll tell you, it's not a salvation issue, all right? It would certainly impact your views of end times and other things, but it's not a salvation issue. And just so you know the wording behind it, if you hear it, there are those that still believe, yes, the Israelites are God's chosen people.

And whenever it makes reference to God's people in the Bible, it's talking about the Israelites as certainly the Old Testament prophecies. There are others that would believe that the Church has replaced Israel as God's chosen people. Now, certainly, Israelites could be part of that, and that would be called replacement theology, all right? So if you want to go and read about all of that, you can. I will tell you, I love people on both sides of the discussion. There are God-fearing people on both sides of the discussion. But I do want to make one thing clear that somebody came up to me after service and asked me, and I'm glad they did because I forgot to mention it.

There are some people that when you say that Israel is God's chosen people, there are some that would say that just by being an Israelite that you are saved and you're going to go to heaven, like if you're Jewish, just because

you're ethnicity. I can just tell you from certainly reading Scripture, their salvation comes the same way our salvation comes. It's through Jesus Christ alone. So regardless of where you fall on that issue, I will just tell you, salvation is the same for all of us. And I do hope and pray that there will be a great revival amongst the Jewish people, regardless of where you stand on this too.

Those that do interpret some of the Old Testament prophecies do believe there's going to be a great revival, and I pray for that. I pray for a great revival amongst the Jewish people. God's plan definitely included the Jews, but it also includes you. The Gentiles are grafted into the family of God. He loved you. He made a plan for you. And this plan has been millennia in the making. And so I encourage you, don't miss it. Don't miss the plan. Even in the Old Testament, do you know that there were people that were adopted into the Jewish family, even though they were Gentiles? They became part of God's family.

And if you are a part of that family, maybe you're here today and you say, "Yes, I have accepted Christ. I've been adopted into God's family." That is awesome. Can I encourage you to show humility and gratefulness and not pride and not pride when you talk with others? Because the Christian message of salvation in and of itself can seem prideful. It can seem like you have all the answers because it's impossible for us to enter into a conversation with others and say, "Well, you know what? You believe what you believe, and I believe what I believe, and we're all going to be fine." It just doesn't work that way.

When we come to others out of hopefully a heart of love and care and mercy and compassion, we look at the Scriptures and the Scriptures say salvation comes through Jesus Christ alone, not through anybody else. He is the answer. And so yes, we point to that and we rest our faith on that. And so you and I have to ask the better question today as we talk about salvation through Jesus. Have you been adopted into the family of God? Have you chosen to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

And as Scripture says, have you confessed Him as your Lord? And do you believe in the resurrection? Scripture says you will be saved. That's what it means. That's what salvation is through Jesus Christ, receiving His death as your own as we celebrated during communion today. And so I encourage you, if you haven't made that decision, know that you can be adopted into the family of Christ. And all of the blessings that are for them will be upon you. And you can be assured of your salvation. Let me close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, as we follow the story of Scripture, we certainly continue to learn about you and about your character. Here we learn that you have a plan, that you are good, that you are faithful, that you can be trusted. We also learn about ourselves that we can be selfish, we can be prideful, that we easily turn away.

So, Father, I pray that you would continue to speak your truth to us, that you would draw us closer to you, that you would help us to take that next step. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.