

Gamma 13

Study 7

1 Peter 2:9

Questions

- 1. What are the four descriptions about the church in this verse pointing to?**

It is important to recognize that these are Old Testament descriptions of Israel (cf. Ex. 19:6; Isa. 43:20-21), now applied to the church of Jesus Christ and giving rise to the important teaching that the church is the fulfillment and continuation of Israel. God's purposes in Israel were not frustrated by the unbelieving rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ (New Application Bible Commentary)

- 2. Why is the concept of race important in the world like it was in Germany during the last world war and even in a nation like Malaysia? When God specifically chose the nation of Israel did he do so because they were special? (Deuteronomy 7:6-9) Why was there a need for a chosen nation? Genesis 12: 1-3. Why is Peter saying that the church is now the chosen nation?**

The concept of race is important all over the world as race conveys physical characteristics, cultural values and traditions, language and even religion. All of these have direct personal, political, economic, and psychological implications. In Germany under Hitler, white people of the Aryan race were held to be special and superior in intellect and breeding than all others and Hitler sought to eradicate other races particularly the Jews as he thought them to be inferior. In Malaysia we are a nation made up of different races and the tension that is plaguing the nation is the notion that a particular race is superior and should be given special rights in perpetuity based entirely on race. So race is important in our country as it confers real material advantages.

God specifically chose Israel not because they were special as He makes it abundantly clear in *Deuteronomy 7:6-9 (ESV)* *For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen **you** to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples*

He chose them because of divine sovereign prerogative. His choice makes them special, they were not chosen because they were special. Now the idea of specialness and being chosen will naturally bring up ideas of being superiority and having advantages intrinsic to the race. However the selection of Israel was

in context of God's plan of redemption to bring all of mankind back to Himself. He chose one man Abraham a pagan Moon god worshipper who certainly did not have any endearing qualities. God established a covenant with Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 and in this covenant God promised to bless Abraham and give him many descendants which now we know became the nation of Israel and it would be through this nation that all nations would be ultimately blessed. Israel would be that special nation to bear the light of the gospel to the rest of the world. So in short Israel was God's chosen vehicle of salvation to the nations. In this regard history showed how God established his covenantal faithfulness in the way He dealt with Israel. It was through the line of David and nation of Israel that Jesus the promised Messiah came.

The nation of Israel represents most of all that chain unbroken covenantal promises unfolding through the lines of history. The nation demonstrated to the world the faithfulness of God towards a wayward nation for much of history and yet His dealings with Israel showed us how consistent God is, how He never abandons His people even though they abandoned Him. There are not a lot of things we can rely on nowadays, banks fail, spouses abandon us, governments change and empires will rise and fall but history has shown consistently that God's chosen race have persisted simply because His promises, His Word is heavier than all the earth.

Peter is now stating boldly that now through Christ, the church is the new Israel, we inherit corporately all the eternal promises of God. He is the one who stands with us and behind us and He will deal with us with love and faithfulness. This fact alone brings confidence and boldness as He is the one we have entrusted our souls to and He will not let us down

With privilege comes responsibility hence this the image mandates that the church is now to the chosen instrument of God to bring the light to the nations, the means by which all the nations of the world will be blessed with salvation. So when we hear that we are the new Israel we inherit all of God's covenantal love blessings and promises to be our God and we to be His people. We inherit the obligations of the covenant but this time fulfilled and worked out in the life of Jesus our Saviour.

3. The church is now the new Israel, the chosen nation of God is no longer based no longer on genetics. How do we become the chosen nation (Romans 4: 13-16)

Romans 4:13-16 (ESV) For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

*16 That is why **it depends on faith**, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the*

law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all

We become members of the chosen nation based upon our profession of faith. You see the promise is now based not on our adherence to the law but our profession of faith just like Abraham who simply took God at His word and obeyed

4. The church is also a royal priesthood and in verse 5b .. a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. What does this image meant to convey to us?

The particular role of priests in the Old Testament can be categorised in to three purposes which are access, qualifications and duties

Access

In the OT only the tribe of Levi could minister in the Temple and only the decendants of Aaron could be priests. Access to the presence of God was severely restricted due to the sinfulness of man.

God's vision for his people however was that they be a kingdom of priests
*Exodus 19:4-6 (ESV) You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and you shall be to me a **kingdom of priests** and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."*

God's vision for Israel was for all of Israel to have access to Him and this has been fulfilled in the new Israel. Through the blood of Jesus that satisfies the wrath of God and takes the penalty of our sin away

Now in fact Gods Spirit dwells within us bringing the realitiy of priesthood to new levels of intimacy.

Qualifications

Each priests had to prepare extensively to come into the presence of God in particular the high priest would have to undergo extensive personal cleansing and prayer for a week prior to Yom Kippur and then he would enter the Holy of Holies in to the presence of God.

In the new Israel as prophesied by Zechariah

- Zechariah 3:1-7 (ESV) Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. 2 And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" 3 Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. 4 And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." 5 And I said, "Let them put a clean

turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord was standing by.

The vision tells of the state of Joshua the high priest all prepared and purified to come into the presence of God but in reality he is still full of sin and unholy and unworthy as the vision showed him with filthy garments. The order was given and the dirty clothes were removed and clean ones given to him and his sin taken away.

The qualifications of righteousness and holiness would be conferred by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. All of our iniquity removed and we will have access to the presence of God.

Duties

The duties of the priests were always worship and offering sacrifices as well as caring for the poor and marginalised.

On top of this the work of the priests were to be mediators between God and the people. Their job would be to bring the word of the Lord and his demands and covenantal obligations to the people and from the people to God he would bring their sacrifices and their petitions to be heard.

In that regard, the church now plays the mediatorial role in the world. The church intercedes for the lost and bring their plight before God. The church prays for the lost. On behalf of God, the church in its priestly role will bring the demands of God to the people. This will primarily be the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news announcement that forgiveness of sins can be had with repentance of sin and coming to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. So missions is a priestly function

5. In this third image, the church is described as a “holy nation” What particular nuance to our spiritual identity is Peter trying to evoke here? Have you thought about how you can be part of the church that is being set apart as a holy nation?

Israel is God’s chosen nation and a holy nation which means it must bear resemblance to the God whose nation this is. The character and direction of the church now God’s holy nation is one pursuing one agenda that is to be set apart for the purposes of God.

How Are We Called To Be Set Apart?

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Now that we've tried to put some language to what holiness means, in what ways are we as Christians called to be set apart? I want to offer three for us. As I do, I encourage you to test yourself to see whether or not you are set apart in these ways.

We Are Set Apart In Our Ambitions

The challenge is consecration being set apart for a particular purpose. If we are God's holy nation then our national objectives must be His. Our over riding agenda is to honor God, glorify him, and please him. People who do not know God live for themselves. When a Christian thinks about their next decision—the next place they'll move to, about starting a family, about going to work— they're aiming at God. They ask, "How can I make much of God?" The center of the target is God's renown and they focus their attention there. Every ambition and dream and desire have God as the one they want to look good. The world could care less about this, but that's why Christians are set apart in their ambitions and aims.

We Are Set Apart In Our Actions

Every activity has purpose for the Christian, even the smallest ones like eating and drinking. Christians do not drink a glass of orange juice the same way someone of the world does. We receive that glass with gratitude—a gift of God's provision. Our actions—the "what" we do and the "how" we do it—are meant to display our enjoyment and love for God. That's why in whatever we do, ultimately, we do for God's glory. Our actions have purpose. They are not random; they are intentional. The world goes on their merry way not giving much thought to what they do. But Christians are set apart in the ways they act.

We Are Set Apart In Our Affections

What Christians love and what the world loves will be different. The world is a rival to Christians, because often the world calls good what is evil and calls evil what is good. That's really what the essence of sin is: it's loving what God says to hate and hating what God says to love. Sin, at the root, is not a behavioral problem. It's a love problem. When we love something else more than God, we exchange God for that thing—whatever it is. But as God's people, our affections should be set apart, namely, what we love and hate match what God loves and hates.

Called Into Light To Shine

As God calls us into his marvelous light, we take on his character. And we, too, begin to shine. Jesus calls himself the light of the world in John 8:12. He calls us that in Matthew 5:14. To the degree that we are "set apart" from the world is the degree to which our lights will shine. You are not meant to blend in like camouflage. If your ambitions, actions, and affections resemble the world, your

light bulb is out. But if your ambition is to please God, and your actions seek to bring God glory, and your affections match the very heart of God, you are surely a bright light in a dark place. We need to test ourselves in this, lest we become deceived. Sometimes we honestly think we live for God, but we're actually very selfish in our thinking and our planning.

Finally the call to be set apart is a corporate call to the church as a body to be that holy nation. Which means we need to participate in a church to express this consecration towards the purposes of God. For it is only in our collective effort as a church that we will be most effective in demonstrating to the world the very character and power of our awesome God.

6. The final picture is that of “*a people for his own possession*” what does this convey to us and how are we to respond to this truth?

Imagine what would be your absolutely irreplaceable most valuable item in all the world that you could not possibly part with. For the ladies it may be a particular piece of jewelry passed down from generations so it has a special emotional and historical value. For the men it may be that signed autograph from Roger Federer or that CD which has your all time favourites. Whatever it is the special possession is what we treasure, what we find irreplaceable and what brings memories and joy whenever we look at it. The mere thought of it evokes pride and brings smile to our souls.

Now we are told that the church as the new Israel is God's treasured possession...the church is that irreplaceable treasure in the eyes of God that is closest to His heart. Israel was that special nation

- Isaiah 19:24-25 (ESV) In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.”

All kingdoms belong to God make no mistake but it is Israel that takes a special place in the heart of God so much so that he calls the nation “my inheritance” In modern terms perhaps we can say that the church as the new Israel is the proverbial apple of God's eye. Imagine being that nation that can bring a smile into God's heart. What a tremendous wonder yet totally undeserved for we were sinners

We respond to this truth by making God our inheritance, our treasure the thought of which will bring a smile to our hearts. We learn to treasure Him by understanding from the Word who He is, what He is like, His goodness, His faithfulness and His mercy.

7. What is the divine mandate or purpose of the church as God's chosen nation, royal priesthood, holy nation and treasured possession? How well are we as a church doing this in FBC, are you apart of that process that is the function of the church? If you are share with the group and if you are not how can the group help?

We are to “*proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*”.

This purpose is both to praise Him and declare His praises. From a people in darkness and without hope we have been wonderfully saved and transformed hence our natural response will be to praise and thank the Lord for his undeserved grace and mercy. Our purpose is worship and praise

The second facet of our purpose is to declare to the world the wonderment of our God especially how He saved us