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## **"A PECULIAR PEOPLE"**

**"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."—1 Pet. 2:9.**

DURING the Gospel age, which is now drawing to a close, the Lord has been making ready a peculiar people for a very peculiar and very glorious purpose. The purpose is nothing less than that of a joint-reign with Christ for a thousand years, by means of which, not only shall "all the families of the earth be blessed," but angels also shall be brought to a righteous judgment and reward, and all things in heaven and in earth will be brought into perfect harmony with and conformity to, the divine will, and universal peace and joy and praise shall abound to the glory of God.

This peculiar people is a new and chosen generation. They were first chosen out from among men, "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. 2:13.) Or, in other words, having believed the message of salvation through Christ the Redeemer, and having gratefully accepted the same, and being earnestly desirous of perfect personal conformity to the divine will, and having, therefore, humbly submitted themselves entirely to God, they were chosen of God to be his peculiar people.

That which renders this people peculiar as compared with all other people in the world is a very radical change—a change of nature from the human to the spiritual. (2 Pet. 1:4.) This change of nature has been brought about by the power of the Truth, which leads those who are rightly exercised by it to a full consecration of heart and life to the will and service of God, even unto death. This change of nature is, however only begun in the present life, and consists as yet only of a change of mind and a consequent change of character and action in harmony with the new hopes, aims and aspirations generated by the "exceeding great and precious promises." No wonder is it that a people actuated by such hopes and aims should be a peculiar people—a people separate from the world—in the world and yet not of it.

They are indeed a *new "generation"*—*i.e.*,—a new race, of a new and noble nature, distinct and separate from the human race, although as "new creatures" they are as yet only begotten and

developing in the embryo state, the full development, or birth, being due at the resurrection. Wonderful indeed is this truth—"Ye," brethren, "are a chosen generation"—a new order of beings and chosen of God as the heirs of his special favor. And not only so says the Apostle, but ye are a priesthood, a royal priesthood—a people to be clothed with authority and power to stand between God and fallen humanity; to lift humanity up from its degradation and restore it to the divine likeness and favor. Ye are indeed a royal priesthood, whose power and glory will appear in due time, to the glory of God and the blessing of all the families of the earth.

But further, says the Apostle, Ye are "a holy nation." In what sense can this people be called a nation? A nation is a body of people united under one government and having common interests and bound by mutual obligations and mutual consent, either expressed or implied, to conserve those interests. Truly such a people, such a nation,

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are we under Christ Jesus our King, and our interests are indeed one: they are the interests of the truth concerning the establishment of Christ's Kingdom in all the earth. Our national policy is aggressive, and contemplates the complete subjection of every other power; but its object, unlike that of all other ambitious powers, is not the glorification of selfishness, but the exaltation of meekness and righteousness and the establishment of universal peace and happiness. Every loyal citizen of this nation is deeply interested in its politics, and is ready to take up the sword for its defense at any moment. However, we remember that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but they are mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds. Our sword is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," and an every-day exercise and drill in its use makes us able soldiers.

Let all the members of this "chosen generation," this "royal priesthood," this "holy nation," this "peculiar people," seek more and more—by vigilance, by faithfulness and by holiness—to separate themselves from the spirit of the world, to submit themselves to the transforming influences of the Spirit of God, and to discipline and drill themselves in the use of the sword of the Spirit, that so they may "show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light."

### **"BABES IN CHRIST"**

This peculiar people the Apostle likens, in the beginning of their life of faith, to babes. Though they may be men of mature years, they are but babes beginning a new life. And the Apostle counsels them, as new-born babes, to earnestly desire and seek for the sincere milk of the Word of God—the simple truths, the foundation doctrines. These are the plain clear statements of the

Scriptures—(1) of the original perfection and glory of humanity, created in the image of God—Gen. 1:27,31; (2) of the fall of Adam and the race represented in him in trial—Gen. 3; 1 Cor. 15:22; (3) of the death penalty—Gen. 2:17; 3:19; Rom. 6:23; (4) of the redemption of Adam, and therefore also of the race represented in him, by the payment of an equivalent price—the sacrifice of “the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all”—1 Cor. 15:22; 1 Tim. 2:6; (5) of the actual deliverance of the redeemed race in God’s due time and order.—Acts 3:19-21.

Those who in simple faith accept these truths and who, laying aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies and envies

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and all evil speaking, endeavor to live worthy of this salvation, esteeming it as only a reasonable service to devote themselves thenceforth to the service of God, are accepted of him as sons and heirs—as spiritual sons. And precious indeed are these little ones in the Lord’s sight. It was with reference to such that the Lord said to Peter, “Feed my lambs”; and again that he gave warning to false teachers, saying, “Whoever shall ensnare one of the least of these who believe in me, it would be better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were sunk in the depth of the sea.” (John 21:15; Matt. 18:6, *Diaglott.*) And again, under the figure of a tender shepherd caring for a weak and straying lamb, he shows his tender solicitude for these babes of the family, saying, “It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”—Matt. 18:14.

But while the babes in Christ, because of their very feebleness and inexperience, have much special care bestowed upon them, and are dearly beloved of the Lord, and while their meek and teachable spirit is commended to all (Matt. 18:4), it is not the will of God that they should always remain babes. The very object of his commending to them the milk of the Word is that they may *grow thereby* out of this infantile state up to the maturity of spiritual life—“that we be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” (Eph. 4:14.) There should come a time in the experience of every healthy growing child of God when he should be able to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ—the foundation doctrines—having them firmly established and settled in his mind, and therefore not needing to dig them up and lay them over again—and go on growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Truth unto perfection.—Heb. 6:1.

The Apostle Paul reproved some of his day because they did not thus grow; saying, “For when for the time [spent] ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat: for every one that useth milk [only] is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.” (Heb. 5:12,13.) We are not to live continually on the milk diet, “but by every word that

proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4.) Some of these words are the simple truths above noted—the milk; and others are deeper truths, the strong meat for those who, nourished by the pure milk, had grown and had developed considerable firmness and strength of Christian character. This "solid food," says the Apostle (Heb. 5:14), is for adults—for those possessing faculties habitually exercised in the discrimination of both good and evil. He also warned them of the dreadful result to them if they should fall away.—Heb. 6:4-6.

If the babes in Christ are fed on adulterated milk—a confused mixture of truth and error concerning the above-mentioned foundation doctrines—the result will be that they will sicken and die, unless the unwholesome diet is speedily removed and the sincere, pure milk is sought after and used. As a general thing there is not sufficient care on the part of the babes in Christ about seeking the *pure* milk of the Word; and many of the adults are too careless about setting the impure milk before them. Let those who are truly the Lord's little ones bear in mind the Apostle's counsel to desire and seek after only the *pure milk* of the Word, and resolutely to discard all else. Any theological views which will not rest squarely upon the above-named foundation doctrines, so plainly enunciated in the Scriptures, but which attempt to pervert and to shift and to make them void, do not constitute the pure diet for the Lord's children. Let them cautiously beware of all such adulterations, and feed only upon the *pure* milk, and by and by upon the more solid food—that is food indeed to those who have their faculties exercised—and thus grow up to maturity, to a full development of Christian character and faith.

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The Apostle then shows (1 Pet. 2:4-8) that such consecrated and faithful children of God have the privilege of becoming members of a grand spiritual house, of which Christ Jesus is the head. The shape of the building to which reference is made is evidently that of a pyramid, and was probably suggested to his mind by the words of the Prophet Isaiah (28:16) to which he refers, saying, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; ... the same is become the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed."

The chief corner-stone in a pyramid is the top stone, which is also the model after which the whole building is being fashioned. The Prophet Zechariah (4:7) calls it the head-stone, and Isaiah (28:16) calls it a foundation-stone. At first thought these figures seem incongruous, but they are not really so when we consider that this building is not an earthly, but a heavenly building, having a heavenly foundation, and that it is held together, not by earthly, but by heavenly attraction. And it is in accordance with this thought that we are invited to come unto Christ, the chief corner-stone, to be built up under him and to be fashioned for our places as living stones in this building, in accordance with the lines and angles seen in him who is the model.

The great work of preparing these living stones for their places in this building of God is still in progress, although it is almost completed. This is the painful part of the work to every one of the stones. The blows of the hammer and the chisel—the hard discipline of experience—are not desirable except for the effects—the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And if we would have the results we must patiently submit to the painful processes, and see to it that no cross-grained wilfulness on our part shall interfere with the work; for such interference would sooner or later be the occasion for abandoning us, and the Builder would substitute another stone more pliable and easily worked; for the time is short, and what is to be done must be done quickly.

The Prophet further showed that the foundation stone of this great building would be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to many until the time of its exaltation. Those who will stumble over it, says the Apostle, are not those faithful and loyal to the Word of God, but those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient, and who will not accept its plain and simple teaching relative to the great foundation of our faith—Christ Jesus, who gave his life a ransom for many. (Matt. 20:28.) And this class, he assures us, were appointed to stumble—that it does not happen so, but that God designed that they should stumble, because they are unworthy to stand, being disobedient.

God lays great stress upon loyal and loving *obedience* on the part of all his children. It was only a little matter of disobedience that cost Adam and his posterity so dearly, and that will bring similar results to all those who, having once escaped the condemnation of death through faith in Christ the Redeemer, thereafter refuse to stand before God in the robe of his righteousness, but prefer to appear in their own. All such were appointed to stumble; but blessed are the meek, for they shall stand. "The Lord knoweth them that are his."

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