



BLIND EYES | HARD HEARTS



"BUT ALTHOUGH HE HAD DONE SO MANY SIGNS BEFORE THEM, THEY DID NOT BELIEVE IN HIM, THAT THE WORD OF ISAIAH THE PROPHET MIGHT BE FULFILLED, WHICH HE SPOKE: 'LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?' THEREFORE THEY COULD NOT BELIEVE, BECAUSE ISAIAH SAID AGAIN: 'HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HARDENED THEIR HEARTS, LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, LEST THEY SHOULD UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEARTS AND TURN, SO THAT I SHOULD HEAL THEM.'" JOHN 12:35-41

ABOUT THE CONTEXT...

Jesus was quoting Isaiah when that prophet was announcing the upcoming Babylonian captivity. Due to the persistent rebellion of God's people, He was going to blind their eyes until the captivity took place (Isa 6:11). So, *pretending* to be blind (in rebellion) resulted in God's *actual* blinding of His people. Note the order.

So, now back to the story of Jesus: The Jews had rejected God's righteousness in a vain attempt to merit salvation on their own and, again, were pretending to be blind. Jesus explains this in Matthew 13: "...their eyes *THEY* have closed, lest they should see..." Did you notice that? It was "**they**" who closed their own eyes, just as in Isaiah's day. These religious Jews were acting like

stubborn children who refuse to eat their vegetables, closing their eyes and saying, "I can't see them!"

Guess what? Paul ALSO quotes this same passage from Isaiah, and AGAIN, he states: "...their eyes *THEY* have closed" (Acts 28:25-28). As a result of many Jews pretending to be blind (when Jesus had made His miracles so obvious), finally, God blinded them so they could not believe *for real*. Paul carefully notes that this blindness was a "recompense" (*antapodoma*), a "payback" for their rebellion. But this "blindness in part" would not keep Israel from seeing the Gentiles enjoying God's salvation. It would force them to realize that their blindness could only be cured by the Healer of the blind (Lk 4:18).



KEY 3: OVERALL VIEW

"The Scripture cannot be broken." (Jesus)

"NOW WHEN THE GENTILES HEARD THIS, THEY WERE GLAD AND GLORIFIED THE WORD OF THE LORD. AND AS MANY AS HAD BEEN APPOINTED TO ETERNAL LIFE BELIEVED" - ACTS 13:48

This third key to Bible interpretation reminds us that the Bible is one complete whole. As such, the Lord Jesus declared: "*The Scripture cannot be broken*" (Jn 10:35). God cannot contradict Himself, nor is He the author of confusion. The overwhelming **testimony*** throughout God's Word is that His heart is inclined towards every sinner: "*God is not willing that any should perish, but that **all** should come to repentance*" (2 Pet 3:9). So whatever Acts 13:48 means, we know it **cannot** mean that God seeks only a limited number to save.

As it so happens, many English translations present this statement "*appointed to eternal life*" in a way that tries to nudge our understanding towards the idea that certain individuals are "appointed" to salvation. But the original word actually means "to align". The construction of the verse in Greek indicates that these Gentiles literally "aligned themselves" with the gospel message they heard. The original readers of the text would understand it this way: "...and as many as had aligned themselves with claims of the gospel, believed unto eternal life." As Robert Tourville explains, "This fits the middle and passive meaning of the verb and harmonizes with the context" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 1989).

* A few select passages that give us a window into the all-inclusive love of God: Isa 45:22; Isa 49:6; Ezek 18:23, 32; Ezek 33:11; Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15; Lk 14:23; Lk 24:46-47; Jn 1:9; Jn 3:14-16; Jn 3:17; Jn 16:8; Rom 3:21-22; Rom 10:12-13; 1 Tim 2:3-4; 1 Tim 4:10; Titus 2:11; Rev 22:17

A COUPLE CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

1. BE AWARE

Be aware of one really important misunderstanding about what it means for a sinner to be **DEAD**.

Some claim that, because a sinner is "*dead in his trespasses and sins*," he can't respond to the gospel unless God first make that person "spiritually alive". Any who do not (cannot) respond must not be one of God's "elect," or so some say.

It is true that man is spiritually dead, but to think of death as inability to receive God's gift is wrong and disagrees with Jesus: "...the dead...who hear will live" (Jn 5:25). Hearing comes before living. Understand: Death in the Bible is **separation**. Man is still morally responsible and capable of responding to invitations—"come," "believe," "trust," "receive"—the list is extensive. The Judge at the last trial declares the basis of His judgment in John 3:16-19—not because they are non-elect, or because they were not given faith, but because they **chose** darkness over light. See also Jn 20:31; 2 Thess 2:10; Heb 10:39.

2. BEWARE

The person who believes that God only chooses some to be saved: a) cannot know if she/he is one of the elect. But the Bible says "...you may **KNOW** you have eternal life" (1 Jn 5:13). How? By just taking God at His word! b) How can we share the gospel when we don't believe God loved "the world" or that "whoever" may be saved if he simply "believes"? How dangerous to change Jesus' own words in John 3:16!

TIME IS SHORT. PASS IT ON!

There is 1 way to Heaven.	Acts 4:12
There are 2 options: Receive / Reject	John 3:36
Christ's 3 Acts: Died/Buried/Rose	1 Cor 15: 3-4
Believe & Receive 4-giveness	Acts 13:38
Secured by 5 words: "I give them eternal life."	John 10:28



For a more in-depth treatment of the topic, visit: www.uplook.org/2016/01/the-great-transition-in-johns-gospel/

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DOES GOD CHOOSE US? OR DO WE CHOOSE GOD?

This is a question that generates many opinions and much debate. Where is the best place to get our answers? **The Bible!** While we love our parents, our spiritual leaders, our godly friends, and helpful books, these resources should never hold more power in our thinking than the Scriptures. "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*" (2 Tim 3:16). So the Bible is our ultimate measuring stick for truth. If an idea squares with the Bible, we keep it. If it doesn't, we sweep it. "*Test all things; hold fast what is good*" (1 Thes 5:21).



BUT HOW DO WE "TEST" THE BIBLE USING ONLY...THE BIBLE?

There are three important keys to doing this. Let's see what they are, then demonstrate how to use them.

1. Understand the **MEANING** of key words.
2. Understand the **CONTEXT** of the passage.
3. Understand the **OVERALL VIEW** of that topic in the Bible (compare with other scriptures).



KEY 1: WORD MEANING

Let's consider the word "**CHOSEN**" and a verse that leads many to believe that God chooses some to be saved:

"YE HAVE NOT CHOSEN ME, BUT I HAVE CHOSEN YOU..." (JN 15:16)

The word "CHOSEN" in the original language (Greek in the New Testament) is the word **eklēgomai** (pronounced *ek-leg'-om-ah-ee*). In its Hebrew form, the word is **bachar** (bā-khar). It means "*to select;—make a choice; to pick one out of many*". While some might be quick to conclude that this word is referring to God selecting individuals for SALVATION, we must carefully see how this word is used in other verses to properly understand its meaning. So, let's...

COMPLETE THE POP QUIZ TO FIND OUT

As you do this quiz, set aside any preconceived ideas you might have about the topic. Just let the Bible speak for itself. Read each statement, the verse and then answer "T" or "F".



POP QUIZ!

The following were "**CHOSEN**" to be saved, to go to Heaven:

1. **CHRIST** was **chosen** to be saved and go to Heaven. **T F**
"Behold! My Servant...My Elect...He will bring justice to the Gentiles" (Isa 42:11).
2. **ISRAEL** was **chosen** to be saved and go to Heaven. **T F**
But you, Israel, are My servant...whom I have chosen..." (Isa 41:8).
3. **AARON (and his sons)** were **chosen** to be saved and go to Heaven. **T F**
"...God has chosen him...to stand to serve...him and his sons" (Deut 18:5).
4. **JERUSALEM** was **chosen** to be saved and go to Heaven. **T F**
"In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen...I will put My name forever" (2 Ki 21:7).
5. **THE CHURCH** was **chosen** to be saved and go to Heaven. **T F**
"...He chose us in Him...that we should be holy..." (Eph 1:3).
6. **JUDAS (the betrayer)** was **chosen** to be saved and go to Heaven. **T F**
"Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition" (Jn 17:12).

TURN PAGE FOR ANSWERS...

IT'S TRUE: THEY'RE ALL FALSE!

By looking at OTHER verses with the same word, we arrive at an important conclusion about the true meaning of this word:

When God **CHOOSES** or **ELECTS** someone or something, it is for the purpose of **SERVICE**, for fulfilling a divinely appointed **ROLE** to maximize blessing, not to limit it to a select group. No reference to **SALVATION FROM SIN**.



LET'S LOOK A LITTLE CLOSER:

CHRIST

Isa 42:11;
Lk 9:35;
1 Pet 2:4

ISRAEL

Isa 41:8

AARON/SONS

Deut 18:5

JERUSALEM

2 Ki 21:7

THE CHURCH

Eph 1:3

JUDAS

Jn 17:12

SO WHAT DO WE MAKE OF JOHN 15:16?

When Jesus says, "I HAVE CHOSEN YOU" (talking to His disciples), it cannot mean to salvation. Look at the verse carefully: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go..." to Heaven? No: "...that you should go and bear fruit..." He has chosen His people to serve the purpose of bearing the fruit of Christ's character in this world.

IN SUMMARY: CHOSEN IN CHRIST

ISRAEL:

Those
IN ISRAEL:
Blessed
and used
by God.

CHOSEN BY GOD

Israel was chosen by God to be the nation through which Abraham's Seed (Christ) would bless all nations. Those born into that nation were considered part of "God's chosen". However, some individuals outside of Israel (like Gentile Ruth) married an Israelite and became part of God's chosen people. It was being "IN ISRAEL" that made someone part of God's chosen. Likewise...

Being chosen "in Christ" can be illustrated in God's choosing of Israel.

CHRIST

Those
IN CHRIST:
Blessed
and used
by God.

CHOSEN BY GOD

Christ is the chosen of God to be that Servant who would bless all nations. It is IN CHRIST that all spiritual blessings are found. The thought of being chosen to be put INTO CHRIST is foreign to the Bible. Rather, the very moment someone receives salvation, they are placed IN CHRIST (Eph 1) and are now considered part of "God's chosen", used by God to fulfill His purposes in the world.

Now let's look at...

KEY 2: CONTEXT

Another important key to unlocking the meaning of a verse is to understand what the verse meant to the original readers (or hearers). Let's use this key to try and make sense of a few other tricky verses.

— Example One —

"BUT WE ARE BOUND TO GIVE THANKS TO GOD ALWAYS FOR YOU, BRETHREN BELOVED BY THE LORD, BECAUSE GOD FROM THE BEGINNING CHOSE YOU FOR SALVATION..." 2 THES 2:13

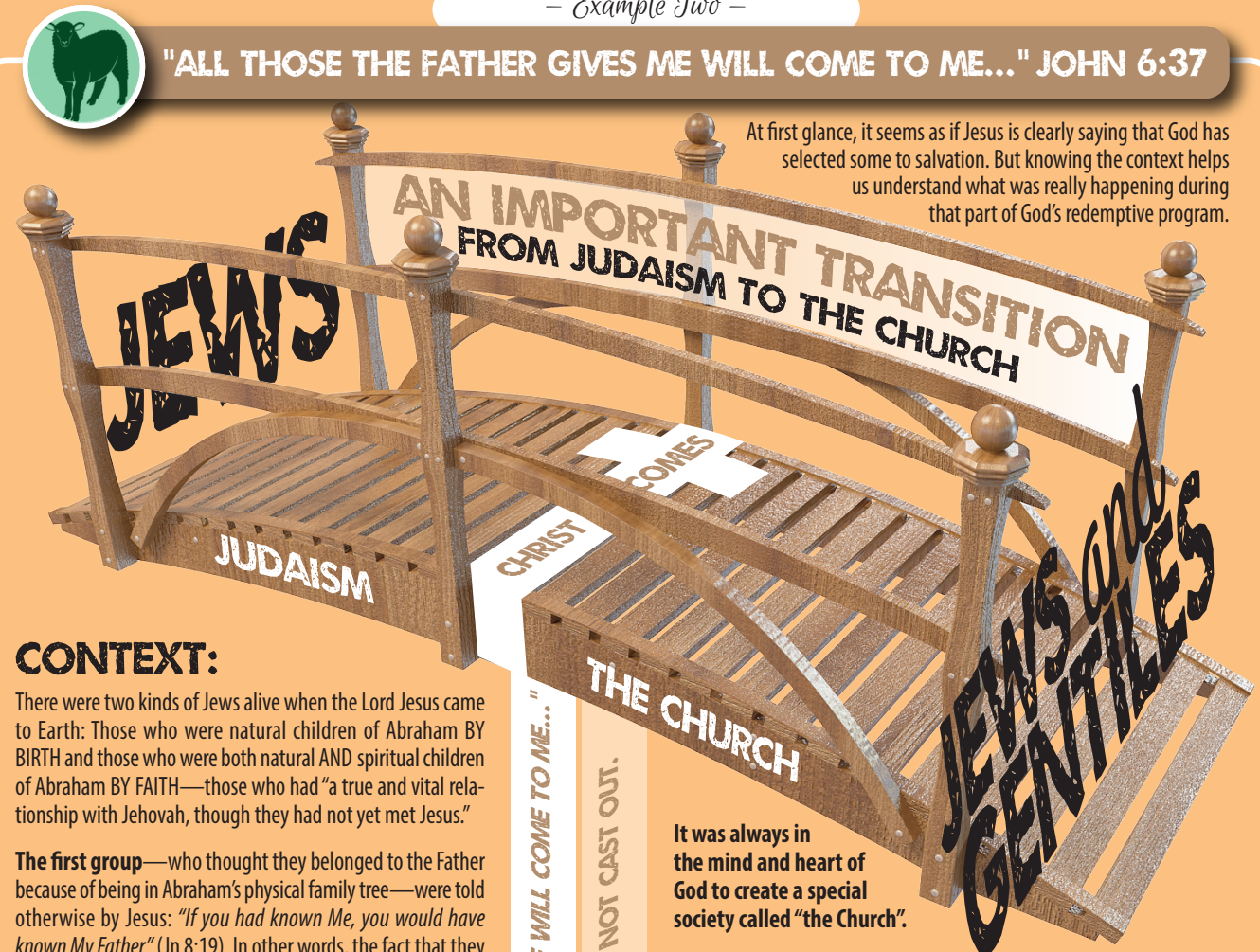
So what was going on in the background at the time Paul wrote this (guided by the Holy Spirit)? The Thessalonian Christians thought they had missed the Rapture (the Twinking-Of-An-Eye ushering of Christians to Heaven). So they thought they would have to go through the horrific Great Tribulation period. Paul is quick to comfort them by stating: No! You have nothing to worry about! Why? Because "God from the beginning chose you for salvation..."

Is he talking here about salvation from our sins? No, Paul is not speaking in the past tense (when we were saved from the **penalty** of sin at *conversion*); nor is he talking in the present tense (as we are being saved from the **power** of sin through *sanctification*). He is talking in the future tense and the Christian's ultimate *glorification*, when we shall be saved from the **presence** of sin. Go on and read the next verse! "...to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v 14). God's message to the Thessalonian Christians was this: He chose from the beginning to take away those that are Christ's **BEFORE HIS JUDGMENTS FALL**. A similar statement is made in his letter to the Romans: "...having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom 5:9). Amen!

— Example Two —

"ALL THOSE THE FATHER GIVES ME WILL COME TO ME..." JOHN 6:37

At first glance, it seems as if Jesus is clearly saying that God has selected some to salvation. But knowing the context helps us understand what was really happening during that part of God's redemptive program.



CONTEXT:

There were two kinds of Jews alive when the Lord Jesus came to Earth: Those who were natural children of Abraham BY BIRTH and those who were both natural AND spiritual children of Abraham BY FAITH—those who had "a true and vital relationship with Jehovah, though they had not yet met Jesus."

The first group—who thought they belonged to the Father because of being in Abraham's physical family tree—were told otherwise by Jesus: "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father" (Jn 8:19). In other words, the fact that they didn't see the Father in the Lord Jesus is proof that they didn't belong to the Father. They chose not to see what was plain: Jesus did the works of His Father but, still, "He came to His own people" (descendants of Abraham) and His own did not receive Him" (Jn 1:11-13).

But what about the second group? These people were those who knew and belonged to the Father because of faith. People like: Simeon who was "just and devout", who was "waiting for the Consolation of Israel" (Lk 2:25). And Anna who "served God with fastings and prayers night and day...and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (vv 37-38). Then there were Joseph and Mary, Zacharias and Elisabeth, and Andrew who told his brother Peter, "We have found the Messiah" (Jn 1:41). These all (and others) "rejoiced to see Christ's day and were glad" (Jn 8:56). It was this group that the Father "gave" to His Son. Notice, it was **en masse** (a whole group) that they were given. Listen to the Lord Jesus...

GROUP: This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of ALL He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise IT up at the last day (Jn 6:39).

It was always in the mind and heart of God to create a special society called "the Church".

In fact, Paul says this was the "eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph 3:11). This Church would be made up of both believing Jews AND Gentiles (something which was kept secret during the whole of the Old Testament!).

It was God's desire to use Israel to reach the other nations, so that "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 26:4). But Israel killed God's prophets and, ultimately, rejected God's own Son. In His grace, God reached out to Gentiles with the view of reaching Israel by provoking them to jealousy.

And so: Those who previously would have been considered the wife of Jehovah (Jews exercising faith in looking for the coming Messiah, Jesus) would now be transferred by the Father to the care of His Son. Jesus said so Himself: "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me and they have kept Your Word" (Jn 17:6).

As for all others—both believing Jews and Gentiles— they are now invited to come **individually with this promise of Christ...**

INDIVIDUALS: This is the will of Him who sent Me, that EVERY ONE who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise HIM up at the last day (v. 40).