



Tough Questions From Christian Teens

Is 'The Jew First' Fair?

By

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‘Children are our future,’ someone has said. There is truth to that because today’s children and teens will take our place in culture and society after we’re gone.

So, what about the future of the Church in North America? What happens when the adult leaders of today are gone? Won’t we need some strong Christians to take our places? I think we will and that’s one reason we need to look seriously at what’s happening to Christian teens now.

Thousands of our teenagers are walking away from their belief in Christ every year and one reason why is because they’re not getting good answers to their tough questions. That’s what they’ve told us and that’s why we started this series more than a year ago.

We have joined with youth groups and a Christian school to address the tough questions from their teens.

Many of the questions Christian teens ask are based on the issues of justice and fairness. How is God 'just' and/or 'fair' in what the Bible says He does, has done, and will do?

We now move to a question about the fairness of 'the Jew first.' The answer is admittedly long, so feel free to read it in two or three sittings. We highly recommend that parents read this series with their teenagers to both better understand their child's perspective and explain how God's sovereignty includes His love and mercy.

For parents who do read the questions and answers with their teens, we suggest you pause from time to time to see if your teen agrees, disagrees or has more questions about the subject. This can be a rich experience for Christian families.

Fairness of the Jews First

God's choosing of the Israelites for special benefits rather than all races: Many people lived and died before the time of Jesus, of these only the Jews had any chance of knowing Him (I suppose they could know him in a metaphorical way). Also, doesn't Paul imply that the Jews come "first" in some ways? Are these assertions true? If so, how are they fair?

Another excellent question!

Even though the name 'Israel' doesn't appear until God changed Jacob's name to Israel in Genesis 32, the Israelite people had their origin in Abram (Abraham). We first read about Abram in Genesis 11. Abram was a descendant of Noah through the lineage of Shem. After the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, Shem and his sons and their sons and their sons and families moved away from Babel (Babylon). Some of Shem's descendants ended up living in Ur of the Chaldeans hundreds of miles from Babel. According to

Joshua, Abram and his family worshipped other gods (Joshua 24:2).

All people were of the same race prior to the confusion of tongues at Babel. They spoke the same language and there was no ethnic differences among them. They all came from the same man and woman, Noah and his wife. What changed at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11) is that God changed their languages and made them of many different races (people groups). We see that in Genesis 10 with the table of nations –

These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood. GENESIS 10:32

When we look at the people groups mentioned in Genesis 10, we see how the different races came into being after the Flood – specifically after the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel. That's why we read this about the racial diversity from each of Noah's sons –

Japeth – ‘From these the coastland peoples of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.’
Genesis 10:5

Ham – ‘These were the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands and in their nations.’ Genesis 10:20

Shem – ‘These were the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations.’ Genesis 10:31

Summation of Noah’s descendants – ‘These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood.’ Genesis 10:32

A quick look at the Hebrew words may help us understand the racial variety that came to the human race from the event at Babel.

families — *mishpachah*, clan

languages — *lashon*, tongue

lands — *erets*, land, earth

nations — *goy*, people, nation

generations — *toledoth*, genealogies

All of these nations of people had the benefit of God's blessings based on the promises and commands God gave to Noah and his sons. We see in Genesis 9 that God blessed Noah and his sons and said something similar to what we find God saying in Genesis 1 as He was creating the heavens and the earth:

Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.'

God did add some new things into His covenant with Noah, his sons and their descendants. It has become known as the Noahic Covenant:

'But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. 'Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man. And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Bring forth abundantly in the earth And multiply in it.' Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: *'And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with*

your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.’ And God said: ‘This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.’ And God said to Noah, ‘This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.’ GENESIS 9:6-17

This is what God did for all the nations (races) after the Flood. It would have continued to be the covenant between God and humans after the Tower of Babel because we see nothing new added to the covenant in Genesis 11.

So, how did people respond to the covenant with God? They all traveled together to the land of Shinar and built a city with a tower “whose top is in the heavens.” Why? So they could “make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” That was a flagrant breaking of the covenant God had with Noah and his sons who were most likely living with their families in Shinar as well.

God responded by confusing their languages and scattering the families abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city.

Using both Genesis 10 and 11, we see that the sons of Noah and their descendants built cities and developed idol worship – the worship of other gods.

An example of this is Nimrod in Genesis 10. He was a great-grandson of Noah through the lineage of Ham. Here's what Nimrod did after God scattered the families (nations-races) – “Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.’ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).”

As we look at these ancient cities in history we find that they had their beginnings in Mesopotamia. His kingdom covered much of what we know today as Iraq and Assyria. Archaeological evidence demonstrates that those early cities worshipped many gods. Sumer, which was the southern area of Mesopotamia where Nimrod established cities and city-states, worshipped several gods. The Sumerian people are the first known people to settle in Mesopotamia thousands of years ago.

Nimrod then went north and established cities and city-states in what we know as northern Iraq and southern Turkey. The Assyrians also had several gods that were similar to the Sumerian gods.

That's how the early groups of humans responded to God's covenant. They broke it and worshipped their own gods.

How did God respond to humanity breaking His covenant and worshipping gods they created out of wood and stone? He chose one man and his family to keep alive the promise of the Seed that would one day destroy the seed of the serpent (Genesis 3). That man was Abram.

Abram lived in the southern area of Mesopotamia known as Ur of the Chaldeans. He and his family would have worshipped the Sumerian gods (Joshua 24:2). Abram was the son of Terah who came from the lineage of Shem, Noah's son. Abram was married to Sarai, but they had no children. Sarai was barren.

Terah had three sons: Abram, Nahor and Haran. Haran had a son named Lot. Haran died and Terah moved some members of his family hundreds of miles north of Ur and named the place he settled after his dead son, Haran. Terah died in Haran.

Genesis 12 introduces us to God calling Abram to leave Haran and move to a land He would show him:

Now the Lord had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they

departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. GENESIS 12:1-5

Abram fathered several sons who had many sons who populated many of the areas we now know as the Middle East. The son who God would use to continue the promised 'Seed' was Isaac. Isaac was born to Abram and Sarai (Abraham and Sarah) even though they were both very old and Sarai had been barren until becoming pregnant with Isaac.

Isaac had two sons with his wife Rebecca, who was a relative. They were Jacob and Esau. God later changed Jacob's name to Israel. Jacob had twelve sons and one daughter with two wives who were family members and two concubines (handmaids of the wives). The twelve sons became the twelve tribes of Israel. Esau had five sons and several daughters with two women who were not from his family. One was a Hittite and the other was a Hivite. The five sons became leaders of their own clans. Esau was known as the father of the Edomites.

The stage was set for something special God was going to do through Israel. He had given all of the peoples of the world multiple opportunities over many centuries to believe Him and obey Him, but the world's population rejected Him over and over again.

God selected one man and his family to be who God would use to bring about the promised 'Seed' of the woman. That is why Israel stands out among all nations and people groups as God's special people.

God gave other people the opportunity to know Him through the following centuries by becoming part of what He was doing in Israel. God gave them a pathway through His Law to become part of His earthly family. Some did, but most didn't. They went their own way, which is what people had always done before. Even members of the Israelite family (those born into it) disobeyed God and worshipped other gods. The difference with the Israelites was that God had made unique unconditional covenant with Abraham, one that God would

keep no matter what Israel did. You can read about in Genesis 15. That was the ceremony that followed the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 12.

Ancient covenants, similar to today's legal agreements and contracts, were dependent on each party keeping commitments they made. However, God moved between the halves of the animals alone while Abraham was in a deep sleep. That meant God was taking on the full responsibility of keeping the covenant with Abraham and his descendants.

We see God referring to His covenant with Abraham throughout the Bible. The Abrahamic Covenant included land and the 'Seed' God promised in the Garden of Eden. That was also an 'unconditional' covenant. God promised Abram that He would bless the world through Abram's Seed. God confirmed that promise and the means of the promise after Abraham obeyed God and did not withhold the only son of promise from possible death:

Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: 'By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice. GENESIS 22:15-18

The 'Seed' that would bless all nations would be Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. How the world would respond to God through His Son would be how they would or would not receive the blessings of God. How the nations of the world treated Israel would also be part of God's blessing – 'I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 12:3)

Many of the promises God made to Israel were dependent on the people of Israel obeying God, but the promise of the land and the Seed were unconditional.

You and I as Christians are blessed because of God's promise to Abraham. Our promise doesn't include the land God promised Israel, but it does include the promise of the Seed.

You can read more about the promised Seed in these studies:

<https://gracelifethoughts.com/2020/01/23/the-great-reveal-our-epic-journey-through-time-space-and-eternity-part-23/>

<https://gracelifethoughts.com/2019/08/29/the-great-reveal-our-epic-journey-through-time-space-and-eternity-part-21/>

<https://gracelifethoughts.com/2019/07/04/the-great-reveal-our-epic-journey-through-time-space-and-eternity-part-20/>

<https://gracelifethoughts.com/2019/06/06/gods-judgment-how-it-works-part-4/>

Now, to your question about the Jews coming ‘first’ in some ways. Paul told the believers in Rome – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (Romans 1:16) That refers to how God gave the Law, information about salvation, to the Jews first.

It’s also important to remember that even as God went first to the Jews with the promise, the Jews would also be first to suffer from their disobedience to that which they were required to keep –

But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man

who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. ROMANS 2:5-11

Paul went on to speak eloquently to the Jews' belief about their special relationship to God. They thought that being a Jew gave them a special advantage over Gentiles. Not so wrote Paul –

What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be [b]true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged.' But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) Certainly not! For then how will God

judge the world? For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? And why not say, 'Let us do evil that good may come'?—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just. ROMANS 3:1-8

Keep in mind that God had spent centuries working with all people and nations prior to Abraham telling them what to do to obey Him. It was after centuries of the world rejecting God that He chose Abraham and eventually gave His Law to the Israelites.

The fairness goes to God's longsuffering with the world. He gave them every opportunity to do what was right, but they chose wickedness instead. It seems fair that after all God had done, He could select one family and make them His people to accomplish His will.

Other Tough Questions

You can read answers to other tough questions from [Christian teens here](#).

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