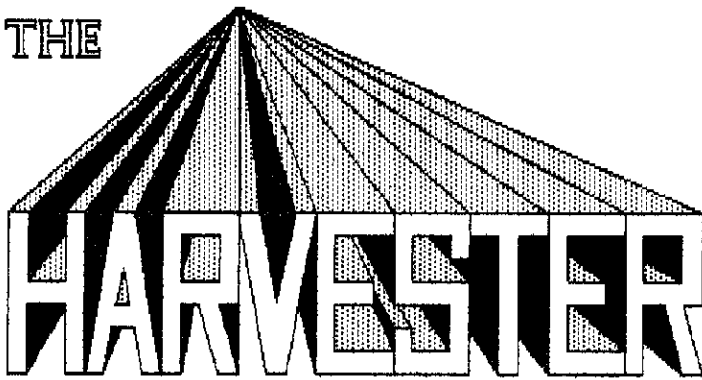


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"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

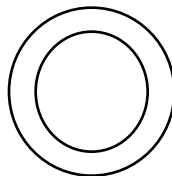
MAY 2002

No. 197

WHERE ARE GOD'S PEOPLE?

In the beginning, mankind came into being through the wise provision of a kind and powerful Creator. The first man, Adam, and his wife, Eve, were created without fault or flaw and were placed by God in a beautiful garden called Eden. Adam and Eve had no sin and lived before God in a pure and holy way. They were God's people. God knew and provided for their needs, He knew their thoughts, and He knew at all times where they were (Genesis 1 and 2).

THE HARVESTER
1120 Sun Hill Road
Birmingham, AL 35215-4106



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But God had earlier created other beings who were known as angels. They were not limited as were Adam and Eve to an earthly existence, and they had no need for a human body as did Adam and Eve. They existed in the presence of God and served Him as spiritual beings. One of these angels eventually rebelled against God, however, and influenced a number of other angels to join him in his rebellion.

Being inferior to God, this evil angel, Satan, was defeated in his rebellion and was cast with his fellow evil angels away from God's presence into the earth (Rev. 12:7-9, 12). Continuing his evil intent and desire to hinder God and His work, Satan approached Eve and persuaded her to disobey God. Eve persuaded her husband, Adam, to join her in this disobedience.

Having lost their innocence through their sin, Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness and attempted to hide themselves. The Bible says, *"And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?"* (Gen. 3:8-9) Of course God knew exactly the whereabouts of Adam, but He was simply making Adam aware of the fact that He knew Adam had sinned and that this sin was not hid from God.

In the beginning, God's people were in the garden of Eden. Being only two in number, it would not have been difficult to identify and locate God's people.

After this encounter with Satan, Adam and Eve were placed outside Eden. There were born to them three sons, Cain, Abel, and Seth, as well as other sons and daughters whose names we do not know (Gen. 5:4). God's people began to spread and were found at various locations.

The increasingly sinful nature of man grew to such an awful extent that God proposed to destroy the earth with a world-wide flood. But because of the righteousness of one man, God decided to permit a large boat to be built into which could enter all who were pleased to follow His will. The boat would thus provide a means of safety and salvation for those who would listen to God. These would be His people. Only seven others joined Noah in listening to God, while the remainder of the entire world perished in the flood that followed (Gen. 6-8). Where were God's people? They were in the boat which God had provided for them. God knows where His people are! They know where they must be in order to please Him -- that is, in the place prepared for them by God.

After man had begun again to multiply upon the earth, God decided to reveal His intent to send His Son, Jesus, as a Redeemer for sinful man. This was revealed to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), and to Abraham was given the privilege of being the patriarch through whose family Jesus would come. In agreement with the nature and perfection of God, Who does not make mistakes, Jesus was indeed born through the family of Abraham forty-two generations later and 1,922 years after this promise.

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address and all correspondence to:

Ray McManus
141 County Road 474
Woodland, AL 36280
Phone: (256) 449-9221

In the meantime, and before Jesus actually appeared, the descendants of Abraham through his son, Isaac, and his grandson, Israel, became known as the Israelites. They existed as an intact people for some fifteen-hundred years, being recognized all that time as the special people of God.

It was to these people that God gave through Moses the Ten Commandment Law at Mt. Sinai (Exo. 19-31). It was to these people that God gave the promised land (Exo. 32; Josh. 13). It was from among these people that God raised up the prophets and to these people that the prophets spoke regarding the coming of Jesus and His kingdom. It was of these people that God spoke, *"He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye"* (Deut. 32:10).

The writer of Hebrews 11:25 referred to the Israelites as *"the people of God."* It was from among these people that God revealed His will and prepared for the coming of a far better and more glorious day which would encompass the entire world. *"But when the fulness of time was*

come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). Thus through Jesus not only were the Jews to be saved, but we Gentiles were also to become sons of God.

The Jews refused to receive Jesus as God's Son and crucified Him instead. Where does that place the Jews in God's sight? Do they continue as God's special people? Jesus Himself answered this question in Mark 7:6-7,9. *"This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men...full well ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your own tradition."*

In Acts 13:46-47, Paul and Barnabas supply us with further insight. *"It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you [Jews]: but seeing ye put it far from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles..."* If the Jews, therefore, have rejected God and have consequently been rejected by God as a chosen people, then WHO ARE GOD'S PEOPLE and WHERE ARE GOD'S PEOPLE TODAY?

He is not one who merely believes in God and Christ (Jas. 2:19,24). No one can earn his salvation or buy his way into heaven (Rom. 5:8). He is not one who simply lives a good life (Matt. 23:23). Jesus Himself said, *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH THE WILL OF MY FATHER which is in*

heaven" (Matt. 7:21). God's people then, are those who OBEY God.

What is required for me to do? That same question was asked by those who heard Peter preach the very first gospel message at the beginning of Christianity (Acts 2). Peter was personally selected by Jesus and inspired by God. What he told them to do on that occasion is also exactly what is required of us today. *"Then Peter said unto them, REPENT, and be BAPTIZED every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off,...Then they that gladly received his words were BAPTIZED: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls"* (verses 38-41). They were baptized, thus completing their duty toward the heavenly Father and becoming one of His children.

"And the Lord added to the CHURCH daily such as should be saved" (verse 47). Note that those baptized experienced a new relationship. They were: cleansed from their sins, received the Holy Ghost, and were added to the Lord's CHURCH.

The clear, Bible answer to the question, "Where are God's people?" is simply that they are in Christ's CHURCH. Being IN the Church of Christ is in contrast to those who are outside His Church and who are not identified as the people of God.

HARRY COBB
PO Box 75
Wedowee, AL 36278

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What was Ruth's nationality?
2. How many cows were in Pharaoh's vision which was interpreted by Joseph?
3. When Pilate sent Jesus to see Herod what did Herod hope to see Jesus do?
4. What was Stephen doing while he was being stoned?
5. In whose eyes, according to Proverbs, should you not appear wise?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who gave away the answer to Samson's riddle? HIS WIFE (Judges 14:17)
2. Where was Nebuchadnezzar walking when the vision of the tree began to be fulfilled? IN THE PALACE OF THE KINGDOM OF BABYLON (Dan. 4:29)
3. Who was the first disciple to reach the empty tomb of Jesus? THE ONE JESUS LOVED (JOHN) (John 20:4)
4. According to James, what should one do if he wants wisdom? ASK GOD FOR IT (Jas. 1:5)
5. What news made the Chaldeans temporarily withdraw from besieging Jerusalem? PHARAOH'S ARMY HAD MARCHED OUT OF EGYPT (Jer. 37:5)

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE & TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
May 5 - 10	Van Lear Church near Paintsville, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 10 - 12	Lizella Church Lizella, GA 7:30 PM EST	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
May 13 - 17	Hopkinsville, OH	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 19 - 25	Ashlock Church near Celina, TN	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
June 2 - 7	Taylor's Crossroads Roan	Edward Herren (Woodland, AL)

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YOU SEE THE BRIGHTER SIDE

Some look for rainbows
When it's pouring down rain,
And some talk of harvest
When they're sowing grain.

Some talk of spring flowers
When snow is deep and white,
And some talk of sunrise
On the darkest night.

There's something beautiful
In the faith that adorns
Those who talk of roses
And never mention thorns.

-- Perry Tanksley --