

God Chooses

One of the major themes of The Bible and possibly the most important theme is that God Chooses. In Genesis chapter one the very first chapter of The Bible God is identified to us as the one who created everything. Chapters one and two talk about creation and

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.¹

God chooses one tree from the Garden of Eden, aptly named the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and instructs the first man and woman, Adam and Eve not to eat from it. In chapter three Adam and Eve are presented with an alternative to Gods choice. They choose to follow the alternative point of view, eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and this decision completely transforms their relationship to God and creation.

Genesis chapter four God makes another choice, he chooses Abel's offering over the offering of Cain. This makes Cain very angry, so God says to Cain ...

"Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."²

Cain chooses to disregard Gods advice, murders his brother and this decision completely transforms his relationship to God and creation. Do you see a pattern beginning to emerge here? In the beginning man and God have a close relationship. Adam and Eve make a choice that conflicts with Gods choice. This step away from God damages their relationship to God and the world he created. Cain makes a choice that conflicts with Gods choice. This step away from God further damages his relationship to God and the world God created. We can begin to develop a working definition for good and evil. Gods work is good, a step away from Gods way is a step toward evil. Thoughts and actions in conflict with Gods way are sin. Let's continue in the book of Genesis and see if these inferences hold up.

Genesis chapter six, the population of the earth is increasing and

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.³

So God decides to wipe out mankind with a flood but chooses to spare Noah because

...Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.⁴

Noah follows Gods instructions, builds an Ark so he and his immediate family are saved from the flood. Two points are worth noticing here, Noah believed what God told him and followed his instructions therefore things went well for him and his family. Only a few people were saved, the rest perished in the flood. Most of the people were taking the path away from God.

Now we come to Abraham. What makes Abraham so special? God chose Abraham, gives him an instruction and makes a promise to him.

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."⁵

What makes him so special is that Abraham...

believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.⁶

¹ Genesis 1:31 all quotations are from the NIV translation

² Genesis 4:6,7

³ Genesis 6:5,6

⁴ Genesis 6:9

⁵ Genesis 12:3

⁶ Genesis 15:6

This is not to say that Abraham suddenly became a perfect man. With God's promise and Abraham's faith in that promise he begins a journey both literally and spiritually, he is now on a path toward God. The Bible tells us he did lots of stupid things along the way. But the journey increased his understanding and strengthened his faith to the point many years later when God asks him to sacrifice his son, his only son with his wife Sarah; he does not withhold from God this precious thing that he loves. He proves his faith; God provides a sacrifice and prevents Abraham from harming the boy.

We see a genuine and close personal relationship forming between God and Abraham based on Abraham's faith in the sometimes preposterous promises God makes to him and God's faithfulness in doing what he says he will do. We can add another word to our vocabulary now, a word that gets tossed around a lot in religious circles, faith.

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.⁷

Now this definition may seem like double talk, but think about it. How can you be sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see? The answer is: when you are confident in the honesty and ability of the one who put that hope in your heart. In other words if someone makes a promise to you and you know that person to be honest and you know that person is able to fulfill that promise you can be sure the thing promised will come to pass. One of the purposes of the various stories in The Bible is to make the case for God's honesty and faithfulness so we can trust in his promises. Faith is trusting in the promises of God and is an absolutely necessary element in the relationship God wants to have with each of us.

The book of Hebrews in chapter 11 lists some of the people we have been talking about as examples of faith.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith Abraham, even though he was past age-- and Sarah herself was barren-- was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.⁸

Notice what it says in the previous passage:

⁷ Hebrews 11:1,2

⁸ Hebrews 11:3-13

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.⁹

This is the choice God has made, to desire a certain type of relationship with us. So now each of us must choose what it will be for ourselves. God puts it another way here, talking to the nation of Israel:

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, ...¹⁰

Let's summarize what we have been talking about. "God Chooses" is the title of this essay. The Bible identifies God as the creator and explains to us the choices God has made and gives us both positive and negative examples of various individual's responses to Gods choices. These examples also illustrate the vital importance of the response each of these individuals made.

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.¹¹

Today we see a wide variety of spiritual points of view and a wide variety of written works on this topic. Much useful information can be gathered from these various sources. But there is specific information about Gods chosen path for each of us I have not seen contained in these other sources. So while I have gotten some insight and enlightenment from various other places I understand Gods choice to place vital spiritual information in the Bible. Making the Bible an authoritative source and absolutely necessary for understanding Gods instructions for each of us. This is the way God has chosen. He requires us to believe what he has told us and adjust our lives accordingly.

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.¹²

I have not spoken much about what The Bible says about Jesus Christ or eternal life. I have focused here on the idea that God has chosen a specific path and requires from each of us a choice also. This concept should create more questions than it answers so hopefully this will begin a dialog and further our understanding. So get back to me with your questions and comments.

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⁹ Hebrews 11:6

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 30:19,20

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 10:11

¹² Romans 10:12-17