

Who are the “elect”?

Part 4 – When Christ is the “Lord of Life”

“In him was life,” **John 1:4**, and God has elected people through the ages to get that point understood, that in **Christ is life**. That was certainly God’s intent with Israel, his first elect, when he told them in **Deuteronomy 30:20** to “love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him.” And why should they focus so intently on him? “For the **LORD IS YOUR LIFE.**” And we know who that “Lord” was from **1 Corinthians 10:4**, where Paul tells us “they (Israel, verse 1) drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.”

And for God’s second elect that rock is still Christ, **1 Corinthians 8:6** “...and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom **WE LIVE**” too. When Paul described Christ to Christians it was in terms of “Christ, **WHO IS OUR LIFE,**” **Colossians 3:4**. And when Jesus described himself, it was in terms like “I am the Bread of life,” **John 6:35**, and “I am the resurrection and the life,” **John 11:25**. Scripture nails it for certain, then, that Life (capital ‘L’) is in Christ, and Christ is the Lord of Life.

But **what happens** when Christ is the Lord of Life? Well, let’s see what happened with Israel, God’s first elect.

First of all, God, in the person of Christ, clearly established where **he** was coming from in his relationship with Israel, in **Exodus 19:5** - “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations **you will be my treasured possession,**” and in **verse 6**, “you will be for me **a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,**” to which, **verse 8**, “The people all responded together, ‘We will do everything the Lord has said’.” Then God outlined the details of his “covenant” and told Moses in **Exodus 34:10** - “I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people **I will do wonders** never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see **how awesome is the work that I, the Lord, will do for you.**”

And then, just before God actually **does** his “awesome work” in the Promised Land, he says to Moses in **Deuteronomy 7:6**, “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession,” because, **verse 8**, “the Lord loved you....Know, therefore,” **verse 9**, “that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations...”

Christ, the Lord of Life, had amazing things in mind for his beloved elect, and all he asked in return from them is “**be holy, because I am holy,**” **Leviticus 11:44**.

So far, so good: God does his part, they do theirs. So why, then, all that **other** stuff in the book of Leviticus - all those sacrifices, ritual cleansings, rules for priests and holydays? Why the need for burnt offerings, grain offerings, sin offerings and guilt offerings, etc.? It's not surprising Leviticus is skimmed over quickly, because what's the point of all that stuff? And what has any of it got to do with the Lord of Life and his covenant relationship with Israel?

A great deal, as we'll see, and not just for God's first elect either, because God enters into a covenant relationship with us too, in which he asks of us exactly what he asked of Israel, **1 Peter 1:15-16** - "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'"

The first elect, Israel, **weren't** holy, though, were they? They were "disobedient and obstinate," **Romans 10:21**. They didn't trust anything God was doing, and "their hearts are always going astray," **Hebrews 3:10**. And that's despite God working directly and personally with them, doing the most incredible miracles on their behalf, rescuing them from Egypt, providing manna every day to keep them fit and healthy for 40 years, and defeating all their enemies. God proved again and again that he loved them and he was keeping up his end of the covenant, but they could never keep up **their** end in return.

So much for their grand response in Exodus 19 about "doing everything the Lord has said." They soon proved themselves utterly **incapable** of doing what the Lord said. Their hearts even hardened **against** God, no matter how much he rescued and fed them. But the remarkable part about all this was - God wasn't surprised! He **KNEW** when he made a covenant with Israel that they were incapable of responding back to him. He knew they wouldn't hold up their end of the bargain, and he said so in **Deuteronomy 31:16** when he told telling Moses that "They will forsake me and break the covenant I made with them." Moses knew what Israel would do, too, **verse 29**, "For I know that after my death you are sure to become utterly corrupt and to turn from the way I have commanded you."

So why make a covenant with Israel in the first place if they couldn't respond? Because in doing so the Lord of Life has some "facts of life" to teach us. He **knows** Israel can't respond to him, so what does he do? He actually **provides** them with a response and accepts it **as** their response. What they cannot do he does **for** them.

And what was this response he provided for them? It was all those sacrifices, offerings, priests and rituals in the book of Leviticus. The book that gets skimmed over quickly, then, suddenly comes alive, because in it is the means by which God makes it possible for an obstinate, cynical, disobedient, disinterested, weak and untrusting people to be forgiven, to continue in his favour, and to keep up their end of the covenant. And it all comes from him as a gift that he creates and accepts on their behalf.

So here we've got the Lord of Life actually fulfilling BOTH ends of the covenant, his **and** theirs! He's not only keeping up **his** end of the covenant partnership, he's doing **THEIR** end of the covenant too!

But why on earth would God do that? Because we, the elect, need to learn the "facts of life." Not about how humans reproduce, but about "Life" as GOD defines it. When God told his first elect, Israel, to "choose life" in **Deuteronomy 30:19**, HE meant life as defined in the next verse, **verse 20**, which is "love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him." Life, in other words, is a relationship with God, where he is everything to us, just like we're everything to him. And how would this relationship happen? **Verse 20** still: "For the Lord is your life."

Ah, so that's how this relationship called "Life" (as God defines it) happens. It happens when Christ is the Lord of our life. So now we need a definition of what THAT means too, right? We know what "Life" is, but what does Christ being the "LORD" of such a life mean? Well, we've just learnt what it means in the covenant God made with Israel. The covenant was all about God establishing a relationship with Israel, where God provides BOTH ends of the relationship. He does it all.

So that's what the "Lord of Life" means. When Jesus says he's the Lord of Life, he means **ALL** of it. Every part of life and our relationship with him is HIS doing. And how did he make that clear to us? By making a covenant with people who COULDN'T have a relationship with him so that HE would have to provide it FOR them. And in so doing it would teach us humans the facts of life, of which there are two, both of which are revealed to perfection by Israel.

And the first fact of life we learn from Israel is that we humans are completely and utterly incapable of contributing anything to our relationship with God, even when it's offered to us on a silver platter full of goodies and promises by God himself. And the second fact of life is that every part of our relationship with God is entirely his doing.

The life GOD offers, then, is quite something. We know it's a relationship with him that involves him treating us as his "treasured possession" and us in return being holy, and in us loving him, listening to him and holding fast to him. In any normal relationship both parties would then do **their** respective parts for the relationship to survive and grow. **But in a relationship with God HE does everything.** There's his part and our part, but he does both! Because that's what being the Lord of Life means. It means being Lord of ALL of it, where he does it all and we do nothing.

And where do we see that revealed, in all its staggering implications? In God's covenant with Israel, where he does everything himself, including even providing Israel's response back to him, and accepting it on their behalf.

So the Old Covenant wasn't about God blessing Israel if **they** obeyed, or entering a relationship with them if **they** did their part or if they pulled their weight at their end, because God already knew they **wouldn't** pull their weight at their end, because they couldn't. The Old Covenant, instead, was about the Lord of Life providing both ends of the Covenant and both parts of the relationship, his and theirs, so that one day they'd realize a human's relationship with God and God's relationship with us is entirely based on the Lord of Life providing all of it.

But how would Israel learn that? Through another group of people God would choose who would **also** be given the command to be holy (1 Peter 1:16), whom God would also elect to be **"a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God," 1 Peter 2:9**, and whose relationship with him would also be sealed in a Covenant, BOTH sides of which God would also provide, the only **difference** being that **"What Israel did not obtain, the elect did," Romans 11:7**. What the first elect was unable to do, the second elect **would** be able to do.

And why is this second elect able to obtain what the first elect couldn't? Because the second elect understand the facts of life. That when it comes to Life, **verse 6**, it is **"by grace"** and **"no longer by works."** The second elect get the point that when Jesus says he's the Lord of Life, he means all of it! In a relationship with God it's all his doing. It's by grace and nothing but.

But how do the second elect come to understand this where the first elect didn't? Because we can now see what the book of Leviticus was all about. It was about God providing the response back to him that the Israelites couldn't produce themselves. It was about God providing both ends of the covenant so the Israelites could have a relationship with him despite their weakness and failure. But now that Jesus Christ has come, the second elect can also see that **Leviticus was talking about him**. All those sacrifices, offerings and priesthood in the book of Leviticus and what they did for Israel, are exactly what Jesus provided **in himself** for all humanity.

And God's given his second elect the eyes to see that. We see Jesus popping out of the pages of Leviticus, and how Jesus himself is the response to God that we cannot provide ourselves. And we see how Jesus fulfilled it perfectly - much better than all those sacrifices, offerings and priesthood in Leviticus, in fact - because he actually LIVED the perfect human response to God. He actually BECAME all those sacrifices, offerings and priesthood himself, which is why we don't need them anymore.

So what happens now that God has provided Jesus Christ **himself** as our response back to him, rather than all those sacrifices and offerings?

Well, let's take a look next at what happens when Christ is the Lord of Life for his second elect under the New Covenant.

And first of all, it's clear that the facts of life don't change, as we see in several New Testament scriptures describing what Jesus does for us, like:

- 1) **1 Corinthians 1:30** - "It is because of him (God) that you are in Christ Jesus, who has **BECOME FOR US** wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."
- 2) **Galatians 2:20** - "I no longer live, but **CHRIST LIVES IN ME**. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in - (or 'of' in the KJV) - the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."
- 3) **Hebrews 12:2** - "let us fix our eyes on Jesus, **THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH.**"
- 4) **Hebrews 7:24-25** - "but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to **SAVE COMPLETELY THOSE WHO COME TO GOD THROUGH HIM.**"

The two facts of life we learn from God's first elect are that God does it all and we do nothing. But reading those four scriptures (above) that's obviously how it is for God's second elect too, because Christ "becomes FOR us" what we cannot produce for ourselves; he "lives IN us" what we cannot live ourselves; HE "authors and perfects our faith" because we can't author and finish our faith ourselves; and it's he who "saves COMPLETELY" because we can't save ourselves at all. In other words, he does it all, just as he did for Israel, because we're just as incapable of doing our part as they were.

The only difference between us and Israel is that instead of the Lord of Life providing us with our end of the covenant through physical sacrifices and offerings, he provides it through himself. All the faith, obedience, holiness, love, acceptance and belief - our **entire** response back to him, in other words - is all done by Jesus on our behalf, a point made very clear in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews was written for us, the second elect. It's the New Covenant version of Leviticus, showing how CHRIST now does for us what the sacrifices and priesthood did for Israel in the Old Covenant, as we see in:

- 1) **Hebrews 5:9-10** - "and once made perfect, he (Jesus) became the **SOURCE** of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizekek." So where does our hope lie as the second elect in fulfilling our end of the New Covenant? -
- 2) **Hebrews 6:19-20** - "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It (our hope) enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where **JESUS, who went before us, has ENTERED ON OUR BEHALF**. He has become a high priest forever." And what does he as our high priest do for us FOREVER? -
- 3) **Hebrews 7:26** - "Such a high priest **MEETS OUR NEED.**" And what need do we have that only he can meet? -

- 4) **Hebrews 10:10** - “we have been MADE HOLY through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” What was our end of the covenant? Being holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). And how are we holy? We are MADE holy by Jesus. He does it for us. In other words, he does our end of the covenant as well, just as he did for Israel, only for us he does it through the sacrifice of himself, “because,” **verse 14**, “by one sacrifice HE HAS MADE PERFECT FOREVER those who are being made holy.”

In other words, HE is the Lord of our lives, and he’s in that position forever. There is never a moment in this life or for all eternity, therefore, in which Life as God defines it is up to us. And right now God has elected a group of people on this earth who understand that, who understand that God actually gives us what he requires from us, because there’s no way we can come up with it ourselves.

And one day his first elect are going to understand this too. “The time is coming, declares the Lord,” **Hebrews 8:8**, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” And how will this new covenant with Israel and Judah be different to the old one? **Verse 10** - “I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts.” This time HE will make them holy, having shown the world for all time in his Old Covenant relationship with Israel that we humans are incapable of making ourselves holy.

So why does God have a second elect at this time? So that someone on this earth understands the facts of life that God taught through his first elect, that the only means by which human beings can enter an eternally successful relationship with God called “Life” is through the Lord of that life, Jesus Christ. Because it’s through Christ that God kept his first elect in relationship with him, through Christ that God gives his second elect a relationship with him, through Christ that God restores his first elect’s relationship with him, and through Christ that the rest of the world will come into relationship with him, as God reaches out to them through his first and second elect together, who can’t stop yelling to the skies, “In him is Life. And all of it!”

But that’s exactly what he elected us for, **1 Peter 2:9-10**. We’re a “chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, THAT you may declare the praises OF HIM.” Not declare the praises of ourselves, in how WE accepted Christ, or how WE gave ourselves to the Lord as though WE had a part in completing our salvation, because God elected Israel to prove we aren’t capable of contributing anything to our salvation.

That’s why Jesus offered himself in our place, doing FOR us in EVERY PART of our covenant relationship with God what we CANNOT make happen. It’s “through CHRIST we have access to the Father,” **Ephesians 2:18**, because Christ is the Lord of life, and by that he means ALL of it.