



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 23  
Issue 566

# *“The People” in Contrast to “the Nations”*

## **A Preliminary Examination of the Word “People”**

Part 3 of 3

by — Charles H. Welch (1880-1967)

### **THE USE OF “PEOPLE” IN THE GREEK SCRIPTURE**

We now supplement our studies of the Hebrew word *am*, translated “*the people*” in the Hebrew Scriptures with the teaching associated with the equivalent Greek word *laos* in the Greek Scriptures.

The word *laos* occurs 143 times in the Greek Scriptures and is translated by no other word than “*people*.” In nine of these occurrences the word is plural, and should be rendered “*peoples*.” Five of these plurals occur in the Revelation, one only in Paul’s epistles, two in the Acts and one in the Gospels.

### ***Laos* in the Plural**

Let us notice these plural references to “*peoples*” first, and so clear the way for the remaining references to “*the people*” singular.

The first occurs in Simeon’s song where it is associated with a “*light to lighten the Gentiles* [nations]” the word being plural in Luke 2:31.

Where Matthew stresses King and kingdom (2:2-6), it is fitting that Luke, which takes us back to Adam and emphasizes salvation from sin (Luke 2:10), should give a place to the “*peoples*.”

The two references in the Acts are found in chapter 4. The one, in :25, is a quotation from Psalm 2 and refers to *peoples* at the time of the end. The second reference (:27) presents, on the surface, a difficulty, for the word is plural, “*the peoples of Israel*.” The bulk of commentators pass this difficulty by. One only, of all that we have been able to



consult, faces the problem and indicates the solution, and that is *The Critical English Testament* adapted from Bengel’s Gnomon by Blackley and Hawes. The comment is:

The present prayer of the disciples clearly answers to the second Psalm, as a comparison shows:

- The kings ... Herod
- The rulers ... Pontius Pilate
- The heathen ... The Gentiles [nations]
- The peoples ... The peoples of Israel.

The problem though faced is not resolved.

The facing of this apparent difficulty is rewarded in a clearer understanding of Psalm 2:1.

*Why do the heathen rage, and the peoples imagine a vain thing?*

It is usual, and in measure excusable, to take the word “*peoples*” as a parallelism with the *goyim* or heathen, as in Psalm 44:2, but a deeper teaching awaits us here. If we accept the inspiration of the speakers in Acts 4, then the “*peoples*” of Psalm 2:1 are the peoples of Israel, and they are thus denominated and mingled with the heathen because they act like them! The very unusual departure from customary usage is a vivid witness of the sad condition of the people of Israel at the time prophesied in Psalm 2, foreshadowed in Acts 4 and fulfilled in the day of the Lord.

Just as hatred to Christ made the erstwhile enemies, Pilate and Herod, friends (Luke 23:13), so rejection of their Messiah caused the separate and chosen people to be classed with the heathen: they were all,



*Gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.*

We now pass to the one occasion where Paul uses the word *laos* in the plural and that is in Romans 15:11, where, in his endeavor to prove that *the Gentile nations had some share in the hope of Israel at that time*, he quoted as a proof text the words of Psalm 117:1,

*Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles [Nations]; and laud Him, all ye peoples.*

The remaining five occasions where the word “*people*” is plural are contained in the book of the Revelation (7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 17:15; 21:3).

### **The Great Multitude** (Revelation 7:9-17)

There are some commentators of standing and repute who have, notwithstanding the definite statement of the early part of Revelation 7, interpreted the 144,000 of the tribes of the children of Israel as of the “Church.”

It will be remembered that we considered this passage in our last article, and gave evidence that the statements of the chapter were to be taken literally. We now approach the second part of the chapter, and the questions arise, “Is the great multitude the Church? Are they Gentiles?”

By far the great majority of writers take it for granted that this company is composed of saved Gentiles. This we question, and ask the reader to reserve his judgment until we have examined the Scripture together. It is no argument to produce Scripture to show that the Gentiles will be blessed through Israel; that is a blessed fact, but it does not prove anything here. The words of :9 are taken to indicate the Gentile character of the great multitude:

*After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.*

The reader will doubtless be aware that the passage should be rendered, “*out of all nations.*” We have met with a similar expression in 5:9-10.

*Thou didst purchase for God, by Thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people and nation, and didst make them to our God a kingdom and priests, and they reign over the earth.*

This is a redemption of scattered Israel, not out of one nation, nor as at the first from Egypt, but from many nations (Isaiah 11:11-12). The fact that those redeemed were to be a kingdom and priests pointed to Israel also. The great multitudes likewise are Israelites gathered out of every nation; they too are invested with priestly dignity:

*They serve Him day and night in His Temple.*

The next three references, Revelation 10:11; 11:9 and 17:15, obviously concern the Gentile nations, but most readers unprepared by the present investigation would have hazarded the conjecture that the word “*people*” was singular in Revelation 21:3.

*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His peoples.*

In spite of all the self-centered misunderstanding of Israel, they were not chosen for their own sake, but that “*all families of the earth*” might ultimately be blessed. Here, in Revelation 21, that goal is reached, and the purpose of their calling having been accomplished, their separation from the rest of the nations of the earth ceases to be necessary or desirable. The Tabernacle of God is at last with men, not merely as at the beginning with Israel. He will dwell with them, and they, the saved nations of the earth as well as the covenant people of Israel, shall be His peoples.

This most wonderful consummation of the promises made to the fathers was anticipated by Isaiah, when he said, in spite of the exclusivism entertained by “*the circumcision,*”

*In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance (Isaiah 19:23-25).*

Israel then shall be the third part with the saved of the two nations that formerly oppressed them, Assyria and Egypt.

These nine references therefore are distributed thus:

Six refer to the Gentile nations (Luke 2:31; Romans 15:11; Revelation 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 17:15). Two refer to Israel in their apostasy (Acts 4:25, 27), while one refers to the goal of the ages (Revelation 21:3) when it shall be as it was before the call of Abraham, when at Babel God looked upon the nations of the earth and said, “*Behold the people is one.*” There they were one in mischief and rebellion, here in Revelation 21 with Babylon destroyed and redeeming love triumphant, the gathered nations are all “*His peoples*” and He shall be with them, and be their God.

We are now ready to look at some of the remaining references to the “*people*” and to observe the doctrines and associations that the New Testament makes with them, and any application of the principle of *lo-ammi* that we can discover as the dispensations change.

## The Use of *Laos* in the Four “Gospels”

While the word *laos*, “*people*,” occurs in the singular fifty-six times in the four “Gospels,” or on an average fourteen occurrences for each “Gospel,” there are about twelve of these references that bear upon the subject before us. Of these, five occur in Matthew and are the following:

*Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins* (1:21).

*For out of thee (Bethlehem) shall come a Governor, that shall rule My **people** Israel* (2:6).

*The **people** which sat in darkness saw great light* (4:16).

*This **people’s** heart is waxed gross* (13:15).

*This **people** draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth* (15:8).

Five occur in Luke’s Gospel as follows:

*To make ready a **people** prepared for the Lord* (1:17).

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His **people*** (1:68).

*To give knowledge of salvation unto His **people** by the remission of their sins* (1:77).

*A light to lighten the Gentiles [nations], and the glory of Thy **people** Israel* (2:32).

*A great prophet is risen up amongst us; and, that God hath visited His **people*** (7:16).

The remaining two occur in John’s Gospel:

*That one man should die for the **people*** (11:50).

*That one man should die for the **people*** (18:14).

The reader may have observed already that most of these passages selected from the “Gospels,” are either quotations from Old Testament prophecies, or the utterances of New Testament prophets.

The five passages selected from Matthew are quotations from Micah and Isaiah, or fulfillment of prophetic utterances.

In Luke the first reference is a quotation from the Old Testament. The next two are from the prophecy made by the father of John the Baptist, the fourth a quotation from the Old Testament by Simeon, and the last from Luke being the only passage from the four gospels that is not either a quotation or a prophecy; this last reference being the conviction dawning upon the mind of the people that God had fulfilled His Word.

The two in John’s Gospel are the prophetic utterances of Caiaphas.

It may be of interest to the reader to know that these twelve passages were selected on their face value before it became evident that most, if not all, were closely associated with prophecy.

It is our joy and our gospel to declare that “*by grace are ye saved*” (Ephesians 2:8), and that God “*will have all men to be saved*” (1 Timothy 2:4), yet it is most certain that such a salvation was not in the mind of Matthew when he wrote the words,

*His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.*

To Matthew, and in his time, it was gospel truth to declare that Christ had come primarily for

*The lost sheep of the house of Israel* (10:6; 15:24).

The other four references in Matthew need no argument to demonstrate their relationship with Israel. The birth at Bethlehem, while containing the germ of John 1:14 and Romans 1:3-4, is primarily the provision of a Governor, that shall rule the people, Israel; and while it was sadly true that the Gentile nations were at that time in gross darkness, and Galilee ►



70 pp., PB

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## *The Doctrine of Substitution: An Erroneous Teaching* A Compilation

This is an exposé of Christianity’s erroneous doctrine of “Substitution.” Though it is widely accepted, it is not the teaching of Scripture. This is a compilation of authors, including: *A.P. Adams, Vladimir Gelesnoff, Andrew J. Jukes, A.E. Knoch.*

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was called "Galilee of the Gentiles [nations]" by way of reproach by the Jerusalem Jews in much the same way as Nazareth was despised by them (John 1:46; 7:52), yet Galilee was a part of the land of Israel and was part of Israel's inheritance.

As for Isaiah 6, no prophetic student or one that had a knowledge of dispensational truth (Matthew 13:14-15; Acts 28:26-27) questions the full application of that passage to Israel, for while it is true that there are hypocrites in every profession of faith, yet the charge cited from Isaiah in Matthew 15:8 was primarily true of Israel.

The same restrictions are observed in the quotations given by Luke and John. Whether it is Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, or Caiaphas the high priest, the prophetic utterance of each employs the word "people" of Israel only.


When we turn to the one non-prophetic reference, namely Luke 7:16, the limitation to Israel alone makes sense of the dawning conviction there recorded.

Should the inquiring reader examine the remaining forty-four occurrences of *laos* in the "Gospels," not a single reference will be found to any nation except the one chosen, favored, yet disobedient and hardened nation of Israel.

Our survey is not complete however. There are the Acts, Epistles and the Revelation yet to be examined; and be it noted before the quest is finished, we are seeking one solitary use of the word "people" that shall apply to any but the people of Israel. If we do discover such a reference, it will need to be most carefully examined not only in its immediate context, but particularly noting the dispensation in which it is found.

### The Usage of *Laos* in the Acts

The Acts of the Apostles contains forty-eight occurrences



***ALL in All: The Goal of the Universe***  
 by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)  
 (#6269) 219 pages, Paperback  
 (See order form.)

This publication is a compilation of the writings of A.E. Knoch on human destiny. The author examines three major theories on this topic current among students of Scripture. The striking phrase "All in all," which pertains to the vivification of all mankind in I Corinthians 15:28 and relates to the reconciliation of the entire intelligent creation in Ephesians 1:23, is discussed at length. Two extensive appendices are included, exploring the usage of the terms "eon" and "eonian" in the Scriptures.

of *laos*, "people," two of which are in the plural (Acts 4:25, 27), but upon examination, it will be remembered that this passage refers to Israel in their apostate association with the "heathen" and "kings of the earth." The references to "people" in the singular are distributed throughout the ministry of Peter (Acts 1-12, 15) which account for thirty of these occurrences, leaving the second section of the Acts, which deals with Paul's ministry, to account for the remaining eighteen.

As we found in the "Gospels," most of the occurrences were obviously referring to the people then present. The only prophetic reference is Acts 3:23, but it is most evident that "the people" here are the same as "your brethren" (:22) and "the children of the prophets and of the covenant" (:25). The only place in Peter's ministry where the word "people" refers to Gentiles [nations] is in Acts 15, after the call and commission of Paul, where James, referring to the incident of Acts 10 says,

*Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles [nations], to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets (15:14-15).*

The prophets quoted by James refer to the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, and to the Divine purpose in the call of Israel, namely that through them "all families of the earth" should be blessed. Paul's great ministry commences with the separation of himself and Barnabas by the Holy Spirit as recorded in Acts 13. In the opening ministry at Antioch, Paul makes several references to the "people." He, being invited to speak to the "people" (13:15), uses the word for the first time when he said, "The God of this people of Israel" (:17), a title used again by him in :24.

The five occurrences of *laos* in this 13<sup>th</sup> chapter have no other people than Israel in view. In 18:10, "much people in this city" refers to those both of Jew and Gentile [members of the nations] in Corinth who should believe, but with this exception, the remaining references, twelve in number, are all limited to Israel. These we will tabulate:

*John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people ... (19:4).*

*Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law ... (21:28).*

*The people ran together ... The multitude of the people followed after, crying, "Away with him" (21:30, 36).*

*Paul said ... suffer me to speak unto the people ... (he) beckoned with the hand unto the people (21:39-40).*

The high priest is called "the ruler of Thy people" (23:5); Paul



✦ *There's not one Scripture verse that teaches that Christ suffered the punishment of sin in the place of the guilty.* – A. P. Adams (1847-1920)  
was delivered both from “the people, and from the Gentiles [nations]” (26:17) to which people the prophet had declared that Christ should show light as well as unto the Gentiles [nations] (26:23). Only three references remain to be noted. They are found in Acts 28:17, 26-27, and have pointed reference to one people only, namely the people of Israel.

### The Usage of *Laos* in the Circumcision Epistles

We now turn to the epistles. Peter in his epistles speaks of the people in three passages, but always with reference to Israel:

*An holy nation, a peculiar people* (I Peter 2:9).

*Which in time past were not a people* (I Peter 2:10).

*There were false prophets also among the people* (II Peter 2:1).

Jude has one reference, namely in :5, and this to the people who were saved out of the land of Egypt. These are the only references to *laos* in the epistles of the circumcision.

Hebrews contains thirteen references to the “people” and as might be expected in a book addressed to “Hebrews” every reference is to the people of Israel.

### The Usage of *Laos* in the Paul’s Epistles

Paul uses the word twenty-five times of which one reference is in the plural (Romans 15:11), and one reference in

an epistle written, so far as we know, after Acts 28, namely the epistle to Titus (2:14). He applies the prophetic utterance of Hosea to the calling of the Gentiles [nations] (Romans 9:25-26) but in 10:21 the “*gainsaying people*” and in 11:1-2, the “*castaway people*” are Israel.

So, too, the three references in the epistles to the Corinthians. “*The people sat down to eat*”; “*with men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people*”; “*they shall be My people*” (I Corinthians 10:7; 14:21; II 6:16) all primarily refer to Israel, although applied by the apostle to the Gentiles [nations] at the time.

The remaining epistle is that to Titus. It is a matter of controversy as to whether I Timothy and Titus were written before Paul’s imprisonment in Acts 28, or whether they were written in the interval, after his release and before the apprehension that issued in his death as indicated in the second epistle to Timothy. The matter cannot be discussed here. For what it is worth we give it as our opinion that I Timothy and Titus belong to the interval of release after the imprisonment of Acts 28 had ended.

Some lexical proofs of this have been given in volumes 14 and 15 of *The Berean Expositor*, which should be consulted. At the moment we are confronted with the following alternatives, both of which are suggestive to a high degree.

(1) On the assumption that Titus does not belong to the present dispensation, then the word “*people*” used so freely and frequently throughout the rest of the New Testament is never used by the apostle after the end of Acts 28. ►



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(2) On the assumption that Titus was written after Acts 28, the reference is unique, and must be examined carefully. The blessed hope which is in the context is “*The appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*” and the use of the word *epiphaneia*, rather than *parousia* or *apokalupsis* is one point in favor of its relationship with the dispensation of the Mystery. The result of the Savior’s sacrificial work is stated as redeeming us from all iniquity, and purifying unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2:14).

The word *periousios* used by Paul in Titus 2:14, and by the *Septuagint* in Exodus 19:5, which is translated “*peculiar*,” is not the word adopted by Peter in I Peter 2:9, which is *peripoiēsis*.

It is evident, therefore, that while in the earthly sphere the people of Israel were called to be a peculiar people or a peculiar treasure, “*above all the nations that are upon the earth*” (Deuteronomy 14:2), there can be no competition, much less usurpation of this peculiar privilege, if the same or similar title should be given to the saints called out now during Israel’s blindness and called to a sphere of blessing where Israel’s pre-eminence is not recognized.

This solitary and isolated reference to a “*people*” that characterizes the whole of Paul’s ministry after Acts 28 speaks volumes. The people who have occupied so prominent a place not only in the Old Testament but in the Gospels, Acts and early epistles of Paul, have now so completely passed off the scene, that they are not even mentioned by name (except in a negative way, Ephesians 2:12), and God is never once called by His great name, “*The God of Abraham, Isaac and of Jacob*.”

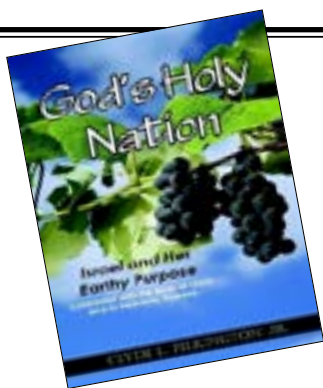
This peculiar people of Titus 2:14 can have no reference to Israel, but is the distinctive name of those called out from among the Gentiles [nations] during this parenthetical dispensation.

**If the Church of the One Body had been intended by God to have occupied a similar position before Him as that determined for His ancient people, we should surely have at least one reference to the word *laos* in Ephesians, Philippians or Colossians. The complete omission of this great prophetic word is eloquent, and should be respected by all who seek to be unashamed of their ministry, in the day of Christ.**

This series of studies, though occupying a fair amount of space, is nevertheless brief and purposely elementary in character. Those of our readers who wish, will find upon closer examination fuller and further indications of the key place that Israel occupies in the prophetic Scriptures, but enough has been brought forward to justify our present quest.

**We live in the days when Israel’s name is *Lo-ammi*, but the day is approaching when they shall look upon Him Whom they have pierced, and the days of their mourning shall be ended. Meanwhile let every member of the high calling take to heart the fact that now, in this parenthetical dispensation, he has been purified unto the Lord as one of a “*peculiar people*” zealous of good works.**

— *An Alphabetical Analysis*, Vol. 9, pages 136-162  
(edited & abridged)



350 pp., PB

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## ***God’s Holy Nation – Israel and Her Earthly Purpose*** Contrasted with the Body of Christ and Its Heavenly Purpose

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Israel plays a key role in God’s plan of the ages. Though currently she has been set aside “*until the times of the nations be fulfilled*,” He is by no means done with her.

Today, God is operating His purpose in the ecclesia – the Church, the Body of Christ. The Scriptures provide us with the clear, critical distinction between God’s *earthly* nation and Christ’s *celestial* body.

Christendom, however, has diminished Israel’s divine significance in an attempt to advance their artificial homogenization of Scripture’s grand theme, thus obscuring the glorious evangel of our day – “*the Good News of the Happy God*” committed to the trust of Paul, our Apostle.

This work highlights some of the more prominent distinctions which belong to God’s literal, physical, earthly nation. In so doing, it is our desire to allow the reader to see more clearly God’s dealings with God’s favored nation, so that they may in turn embrace a *far greater* calling and purpose.

## Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 1:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
  - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
  - union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

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<i>Scripture Version</i>	Concordance (Knoch)
(Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are taken from the <i>Bible Student's Version</i> ).	CL: A Critical Lexicon and Concordance (Bullinger)
CV: Concordant Literal Version	CWS: Complete Word Study Dictionary (Zodhiates)
DAR: Darby Translation	FoS: Figures of Speech (Bullinger)
DT: Dabhar Translation	SEC: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
FF: Ferrar Fenton Bible	TGL: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon
KJV: King James Version	UR: Unsearchable Riches
RE: Rotterdam's Emphasized Bible	VED: Vine's Expository Dictionary
WT: Weymouth Translation	YAC: Young's Analytical Concordance
YLT: Young's Literal Translation	
<i>Reference Sources</i>	<i>Reference Notations</i>
AA: Analytical Analysis (Welch)	<i>cf.</i> – compare
BDB: Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon	<i>e.g.</i> – for example
CB: Companion Bible Notes & Appendixes (Bullinger)	<i>et al.</i> – and others
CC: Concordant Commentary (Knoch)	<i>etc.</i> – et cetera (and so on)
CKC: Concordant Keyword	<i>ff.</i> – and the following
	<i>i.e.</i> , – that is

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