

WHO ARE "THE FIRST" -- WHO ARE "THE LAST"

Many have wondered about what Jesus meant when he said in Lu 13:30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

Mat.20:16 "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen". First we must look at the subject that is being discussed in the 19th chapter of Matthew.

Mat.19:27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

Peter is asking what their reward will be in the next life:

28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration (when things are made new) the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jesus' first answer is regarding only the twelve apostles, not everyone. Then in the next verse he does include others.

29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

Jesus is not giving people permission to abandon their families, but is emphasizing "for my name sake"; their responsibilities toward him are more important. In other words "don't allow these things to become more important than my plan for your salvation."

30 But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

Then he continues explaining the workers arguments.

Mat 20:1 ¶ For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny (set amount of money) a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny (the same reward).

- 10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.
- 11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,
- 12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.
- 13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?
- 14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.
- 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?
- 16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

Now we see Jesus is actually using a parable to explain a spiritual "calling". The first level of the parable is showing that those who are called last will receive the same reward as the first group, IF they work to the end of the day (end of life). However, you must also be "chosen." Just because you have been "called" doesn't guarantee that you will be "chosen" unless you do continue working until the job is finished (the rest of your life).

Now the next part of the question is: what is the difference between "calling" and "chosen?" Jesus uses another parable to explain.

Mar 4:14 The sower (the holy spirit) sows the word.

- 15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.
- 16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;
- 17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.
- 18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,
- 19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.
- 20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred. (This, of course, depends more on attitude than on ability).

By the above parable Jesus shows what can happen when one comes into contact with the seed of truth. This is when you are being "called". In other words: you have been given the opportunity to choose eternal life, by obeying God, or by following the way of the world, leading to eternal death. The parable shows that most will follow the way of the world (Satan's way). Thus many are called but few are chosen.

- Lu 13:23 ¶ Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,
- 24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.
- 25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

Mt 7:21 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.

Mt 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

Lu 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Lu 13:30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

The next question can be: "chosen" for what?" We all want to know what the reward will be at the end for being chosen. There are so many places in the bible that we could go to find the answers. Paul says:

2Co 4:18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. Rom 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature (creation) waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

Paul tells when he was actually allowed to see into the third heaven about fourteen years before.

2Co 12:2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

2Co 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Peter says:

1Pet 1:4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 ¶ Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: (tests)

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Rev. 21 and 22 describes the new city of Jerusalem, that comes down from God out of heaven; it gives a good answer for the future of a believer. Chapter 21 gives a detailed description of this gigantic city of pure gold that the chosen can spend eternity in as an obedient child of God. Read the study "The Size of the New City of Jerusalem" in foust.info.

¶ And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

However, there is a higher level of meaning in this parable. Jesus did not explain more to the disciples because he told them they were not ready for more information yet. This parable was not strictly for the disciples, nor for the ungodly Pharisee leaders. It was also a message for Israel as a nation who has turned against God and His son.

Am3:1 ¶ Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole (13 tribes) family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

If you have studied much of the history of Israel you already know they were the "first" nation that God dealt with. They were the "first" not the "last" for many, many years.

Mat 10:5 ¶ These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Note: The lost sheep of the house of Israel does not refer to the Jews, but to the other tribes that has scattered throughout the world and are existing today as great nations, fulfilling the prophecies of the prophets.

7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Even Jesus came only to Israel during his ministry. His primary ministry to the Gentiles would not begin until after his resurrection, not before.

Mar 7:25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

28 And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

So can we know the "first" that Jesus was talking about was the nations of Israel, even of today? To determine who Israel is today, read the study about Israel on this list of studies. The next thing we need to find is what is the most important goal in the life of Christians today? It is very plain; almost everyone will say they want to go to heaven, or if they know about the resurrections, they hope to be in the "first"

resurrection that promises eternal life. So what really is the reward?

1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (This is the first resurrection.)

Re 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.

Re 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

So, who was the "last" that will become the "first" to receive these rewards? The next verses show us where Jesus called the man Paul to be a special apostle to them.

Ro 1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Ro 11:13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.

1Co 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God,

Act 13:44-46 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

Paul is very upset that these Israelites have rejected the greatest gift one can ever be offered. He says it was necessary to offer it to them first. Why? Because they were the "first".

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

Act 26:20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

Ac 26:23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Ro 15:16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. (spirit).

Not only was Paul ordained by Jesus to go to the Gentiles of his day, his teachings are recorded for their benefit even today and into the future. But here is the surprising prophecy that Jesus lets us see now about his parable when he stated "the last shall be first and the first shall be last." It is plain that he was talking about physical Israel once being first and the Gentiles being last. But, now a drastic change is made. Those (Gentiles) who were once "last" will now be "first". That is a prophecy that we can see into much farther when we read the future of the seven Gentile churches in Rev. 2 and 3. How can we know they exist during the end of this age? Because the last church of Laodicea is still existing during the Beast Power and will go into the period of the seven plagues of God's wrath to be purified since they are neither hot nor cold, spiritually.

Rev 3:14 ¶ And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Read in Rev. 18:4-9 where Babylon, the great harlot of false religions, is being destroyed and God begs the last remnant of His Gentile church to "come out of her my people". This event is at the very end of this age, just prior to the return of Christ.

What does all this mean? It means that there will be few Israelites in the first resurrection. It appears there will be apostles, and 144,000 of the tribe of Israel, which is a small number compared to the billions of Gentiles that John saw as a preview, in his vision.

Rev 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

13 ¶ And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Christ will feed them spiritual food (education) and give them spiritual water, (the Holy spirit). Now some might think the above verses prove that these people are presently up in heaven,, but you must remember most prophecies are written in "prolepsis" which means "presentation of an event that is yet to happen told as if it has already happened". Read the study "When is the Fullness of the Gentiles".

Getting back to this study: While studying the entire book of Revelation we will not read another thing about Israel as an active part of the world, or religion, until after the thousand year reign of Christ and his saints (who will be in the first resurrection). Neither does Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John go beyond the time of Christ's ascension to speak of Israel. These saints are martyrs from the seven Gentile churches of Revelation. Then the rest of the dead do not live again until after the thousand year period.

Israel is not mentioned as a nation until "the whole house of Israel" is resurrected as described in Eze 37:1-19. Read the study "The Rest of the Dead"

Those of us who want to believe that we will make it in the first resurrection have a slim chance unless we start believing God and abiding by His rules. This was his stern warning to Israel comparing Israelites to Gentiles during his ministry. This also tells us about a resurrection of some specific Gentiles in the far future.

Mat 11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! (Israelite cities) for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, (Gentile cities) they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. Read the study "The Fifth Age a Day of Judgment".

Conclusion: I hope the reader finds, as I have, that the thirteen tribes of Israel was God's "first" favorite nation. He wanted her to be an example of Godliness to the rest of the world, while showing the benefits it produces, but, alas she failed. The penalty will be severe. She could have been the "first" and been in the first resurrection. She could have lived for all eternity and ruled with Jesus over the Gentile nations during the millennium. However, now she has given the privilege to the resurrected Gentiles and is following Satan. She was the "first" that will become the "last". She is also among the "Rest of the Dead" who will live not again until after the millennium. Read the study "Who Are You" in foust.info

Even though Israel is now the "last" she will not remain in that position forever. She will once again become reconciled to God in the sixth age, after the resurrection of the Whole House of Israel takes place, after the millennium. We can read about this in Ez 37:25-28, 36:18-28, and Jer 31:33. There are many other prophets, throughout the bible, that explains more on this topic. God will bring them back into their land and give them a new heart and they will "never profane His name again."

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