

The  
Stiff-necked People



Bible Study Series

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# The Stiff-necked People

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The Holy Scripture, both Old and New, talks about the stiff-necked.

So, who are these? Let us see: -

*Exd.32:9 "And the Lord said to Moses, I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people."*

*33:3,5 "For you are a stiff-necked people."*

*Deut 9:6 "Therefore understand that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people."*

*10:16 "Therefore circumcise the fore-skin of your heart and be stiff-necked no longer."*

*31:27 "For I know your rebellion and your stiff neck."*

*Acts 7:51 "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you."*

*Is. 65:2, 3 "I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts; a people who provoke me to anger continually to My face."*

*Ps.95:7-11 "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me, provoked Me, and saw My work.*

*Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, it is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known My ways: unto whom I swear in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest."*

This was written centuries after the provocation in the wilderness. **Why!!**

From the above it is obvious that God was and is still talking about the Jews, the Israelites, the Children of Abraham who was granted God's Covenant. And here is the covenant: -

***Exd. 19:5, 8 "If you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people (meaning chosen or special people).***

***And all the people answered together, and said, all that the Lord has spoken, we will do."***

From all the above, we can see how the Israelites were disobedient, stiff-necked, obstinate, and unwilling to listen to the Lord's voice, and how He has forsaken them. And I find the parable which our Lord Jesus Christ mentioned in Mat. 21:33 ; Mark 12:1 & Luke 20:9, is the best illustration of the position they took against God and His Son, which led them to insult and kill His prophets; and even did not stop short of killing His own beloved Son.

God is Holy and righteous, and He hates and cannot tolerate sin. That is why God did not give Adam a second Chance to repent and redeem himself, yet He gave them every chance to come back to Him, but they did not give any notice to this; despising the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads them to repentance (Rom. 2:4). And the question here is: did they repent? Let aside killing His beloved Son, are they repenting and believing now?! **No**, they still are stiff-necked.

And before we proceed any further, we must understand the definition of three important words which were mentioned and used frequently in the Old Testament and then used in the New Testament again but with a different concept and definition:

**1- Children of Abraham:** In the old Testament it literally meant the children (in the flesh) of Abraham by lineage i.e. his descendents. In the New Testament it means those who are righteously living by Grace through Faith, exactly as was Abraham living righteously by Faith.

So, in short the children of Abraham in the New Testament are the believers in Christ.

**2- Israel:** In the Old Testament it also literally meant the children (in the flesh) of Jacob who was called Israel by God. In the New Testament as per the above mentioned facts, Israel is the universal community of believers in Christ.

And here are some verses to support what I just said: -

Rom. 9: 6 "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel."

7 "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children."

31 "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness."

**3- Jerusalem:** In the Old Testament it meant the physically existing earthly city which we know now. In the New Testament it refers to the Heavenly city which will descend from Heaven for the believers in Christ.

Once we know the new meanings of these three words, we shall understand the facts referring to them in the context of the New Testament, and will eliminate any confusion.

Let us now, ponder a little on the story of the Israelites who perished in the wilderness and did not enter God's rest (to them it was the promised land) according to what is mentioned in Hebrews 3:7-18..

**Now**, since we learned how the Israelites perished in the wilderness and did not enter His rest because of their disobedience, I do not wish to leave this subject before we discuss the issue of the :

### **Chosen People of God :**

Weren't all the people who left Egypt Israelites? The answer is **Yes** except for very few proselytes. Weren't they all chosen people according to the flesh since they were the children of Abraham? The answer is **Yes** again.

Yet they perished and did not enter in God's rest. So, how could they have been chosen? And the answer came swiftly and clearly in Heb.4:6 "because of their unbelief". Let us now go back to the Epistle. Wasn't it written to the Hebrews (the Jews)? The answer is **Yes**. But notice what the Holy Scripture tells them in 4:1 "*Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to*

*come short of it.*” And why should they come short of it if they were the chosen people? In other words, he is telling these Jews that they are not immune from being short of entering into God’s rest, if they disbelieve like their ancestors who unfortunately did not enter in God’s rest because of their disbelief (even though they are children of Abraham being the chosen people according to the flesh).

So being the children of Abraham according to the flesh does not make them chosen people!!

Didn’t the Holy Scripture in more than one occasion, say that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones?! (Mat. 3:9 & Luke 3:8)

So, how can anyone (then or now) say that they are the chosen people?!!

Now, let us leave the Epistle to the Hebrews for a while and see what Jesus Himself told them (the Jews) at His Triumphant entry into Jerusalem: - *“O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children, even as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? **Behold your house is left unto you desolate.**”*

This in our earthly language is a **curse**. Then, how could it be that God curse His own chosen people and forever as Mat 23:37 implies?!! There must be a good reason, and that is their disbelief.

Now, how did Israel come to this great privilege of being God’s chosen?

In Gen. 15:9 -18, the Holy Scripture tells us that God made a **Covenant** with Abraham which He also renewed with Isaac and Jacob after him.

But, what is a **covenant**? It is simply an agreement between two or more parties, but for the sake of simplicity, let us say it is between two parties. And the parties in this covenant were God on one hand and Abram (and his descendants) on the other hand.

Usually the covenants in the old days were made between two Kings (one of them is the conqueror and the other is the defeated), and usually it stated that the defeated has certain obligations towards the conqueror and in return the conqueror will provide peace and security to the defeated King and his people. And at the end of the written document, each of the two Kings will sign his name and **swear** that he will be cursed if he does not comply with the terms of this agreement.

Not only that, but the agreement will be rendered null and void if the defeated or either party does not comply with it, and the conqueror will punish the defeated.

Then they cut an animal longitudinally and walk in between the two halves of the animal, and each King takes a copy of the agreement which he keeps at the feet of his God or Idol in its temple.

And that is exactly what God has done with Abram. See what the Holy Scripture says in **Genesis 15:**

**v.9 “And He (The Lord) said unto him (Abram), take Me a heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon..”**

**v.10 “And he took unto Him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another; but the birds divided he not.”**

**v.12 “And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.”**

**v.13 “And He (God) said unto Abram, know of surety that thy seed shall be a**

*stranger*  
*in a land, that is not theirs, and shall serve them four hundred years;*  
v.18 *“In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.”*

I said that is exactly what God has done with Abram, and that is true except for the copies of the covenant because there was no temple to put them in it. But God gave them later to Moses on Mount Sinai in the form of two tablets of stone which were kept at God's feet, under the Mercy Seat inside the Ark (See Exd. 16:33,34 & Num.17:8-10).

Very unfortunately, the Jews and most of the Christians especially in the western hemisphere look only at one side of the coin which is God's obligation; and they do not wish to look at, or intentionally ignore the other side which is Israel's obligation. They feel that they are the chosen people, they can do whatever they like and still God **has** to keep his side of the covenant.

But, should God keep his side of the covenant? The answer is **NO**, because there is **NO agreement anymore**. It is **null and void**. It is forfeited, because Israel did not keep its side of the agreement. God told them they will be His chosen people and He will be their God as mentioned before on page 2: *“If you will obey My voice indeed, and Keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people. And all the people answered together, and said, all that the Lord has spoken, we will do.”* (Exodus 19:5,8) We must understand that this statement is conditional as it is obvious from the phrase *“if you will obey”*.

Did they obey? The answer is **NO** again. They did not accept Him then, and they did not accept Him when He came in the flesh (Killed Him), and they still do not accept Him now!!.

He just delivered them from the slavery in Egypt, and they left Him and worshipped the golden calf, and kept murmuring all the time which is described by God as disbelief. And now He graciously delivered them from their sins **free**, and yet they rejected Him. Listen to what the Holy Scripture says about that:-

*John 1:11 “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”*

*Mat. 21:42 “Jesus said unto them, did you never read in the Scripture, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.”*

*Acts 4:11 “This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.”*

And in the Old Testament the Holy Scripture says: -

*Jer. 23:39, 40 “Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of My presence. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.”*

*Is. 22:14 “And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die, says the Lord of Hosts.”*

*Is. 1:7 “Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.”*

**If all the above mentioned verses do not show and express the anger of God at their behavior, then I do not know what else could do.**

God does not tolerate sin, especially against the Holy Spirit. Listen to what Jesus said: -  
*Mark 3:29 "But he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal damnation."*

*Luke 12:10 "But to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven."*

All the scholars have agreed that blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, means blaspheming against God Himself since God is Spirit. They further agreed that blaspheming against God means not accepting God. And since the Jews did not accept Jesus Christ then accordingly, they have not accepted God. What is more condemning than that?!

And please don't confuse the issues and insult the beautiful gifts of God by saying that He gives unconditionally. Yes, certainly He gives His love, His Grace, and all His goodness and blessings unconditionally. But when we look at any covenant old or new, we find that it is always conditional.

Look for example at the famous John 3:16 "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son**". If we stop here, we would correctly say that God loved the whole world unconditionally and the entire world is saved by Him and Satan is out of business and out of company in Hell.

But this is not what the Scripture says. See the rest of the verse. It says "**that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life**". So, the condition here is "**Whosoever believes in Him**". It is then obvious that this new covenant is between God as one party and the other party, are those who believe in Him.

And there are many examples of these conditional statements in the Bible, Here are some of them: -

*John 3:36 "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

*6:54 "Who so eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up in the last day."*

*8:12 "Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that follows Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life."*

*8:24 "I say therefore unto you, that you shall die in your sins; for if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins."*

*11:25 "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."*

*:40 "Jesus said unto her, said I not unto you, that, if you would believe, you should see the Glory of God?"*

*14:6 "Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me."*

*Acts 16:31 "And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house."*

Now, how about those who do not believe in Him? Certainly there is **NO** covenant for them. Will they enter in His rest and be in His presence for eternity? The answer is

certainly NO. They will be enjoying the everlasting fire with Satan and his fallen angels.

So, the question here is: Did the Jews believe in Him then and do they believe in Him now? And the answer is NO again. Consequently, there will be no place for them in His rest. Listen to what the Holy Scripture says: ***“Therefore behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of My presence. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.”*** (Jer. 23:39, 40)  
How just is God!!

## . Myths:

- 1- The second coming is conditional by returning of the Jews to their land.**
- 2- The second coming is conditional by rebuilding the Temple.**
- 3- The second coming is conditional by saving the remnant.**

I challenge anyone who can show me, even one single verse in the Old or the New Testament, that says, even remotely, that the second Coming of Christ is conditional by the return of the Jews to the promised land, which they lost by their own disobedience, OR conditional by rebuilding of the Temple!!

Yes, they returned to a land (not the Promised Land as per God’s description in Gen. 15:18); and they may rebuild the Temple, but this is their own doing; God did not say that.

Let us be logic! Think with me, The two main reasons for building the Temple, were originally for:-

- 1- For the Lord to be amidst His people, for as we know the Spirit of God was on the Mercy seat in the Holy of Holiness, separated from the people and even the Priests by the heavy curtain which was torn from up down on the day of crucifixion.

So, this reason is not valid anymore as evidenced by the torn curtain.

Not only that, but we also know and believe that God abides in each of us individually.

So, there is no place any more for His collective abidance in a temple as was the case before. Let us see what the Holy Scripture says about that: -

**1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:16, 7** “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? For the temple of God is Holy, which temple you are.”

**1<sup>st</sup> Cor.6:19** “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you?”

**2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 6:16** “For you are the Temple of the Living God.”

- 2- The 2<sup>nd</sup> reason was for offering sacrifices. And we also do not need that now, since the one only ultimate and universal sacred sacrifice was offered by Christ’s body Himself on the cross.

So, why should be a Temple any more?

Furthermore, where is the Ark now?

And to those who call themselves Christians and yet advocate the necessity of rebuilding the Temple, I would advise them to go back and study their Bible if they ever read it before!!

**And So, my dear Christian:** if you still feel that there is a need for an animal sacrifice, then you are ignoring the great sacrifice, the Lord Himself offered on your behalf, and saying that Christ's body and blood are not sufficient for your salvation.

And do you know what the result of this thought is? **It is eternal Damnation!!**

**As for myth # 3,** it has been mentioned in Romans 9:27 that the remnants of Israel shall be saved. And that is great, because it is about time that they should at last accept Jesus Christ as their savior and believe in Him. But unfortunately the verse does not mention anything about the second coming.

But, the question is: did or do they believe in Jesus Christ? It may be true for some sporadic individuals every now and then, but not the whole nation as one would expect. And till they do that, how about the millions of Jews who died without believing in Christ over the past 2000 years? Were they saved? Were they really chosen people of God?!

Paul in his epistle to the Romans, talks clearly and bluntly about the broken branches (The Israelites) off the olive tree, and grafting or implanting new branches (The Gentiles).

Rom. 11:17 "And if some of the branches be broken off, and you (The Gentiles) being a wild olive tree were grafted among them."

19 "You will say then, the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in."

Please notice the past tense in "**were broken**" which means that the original branches had been already broken, no question about that. And don't tell me that God broke them so that He can implant or graft other different branches because God does **NOT** break anything. Listen to what the Scripture says in Is. 42:3 & Mat.12:20:"A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench." So, you see, had they were even a bruised reed or a smoking flax, God would have never broke them, on the contrary, He would have kept them and nourished them to live. **They are the ones who broke themselves out of the tree!!**

Not only that, but if God wants to graft different branches why would He brake the original branches especially if they were good and healthy?!

Something else: if the road is so rosy for the Jews to do whatever they like from disbelief to disobedience being the chosen people and at the end enjoy eternal life with God; then why Paul was so disturbed spiritually about them saying that he has great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for his brethren and kinsmen the Israelites and he wished he would be accursed of Christ for their own sake (Rom. 9:2, 3)? And why did Jesus Christ come to the world, and die? Was it for nothing?!! After all He was a Jew according to the flesh and He came primarily for them and generally for the rest of the world but unfortunately He came unto His own, and His own received Him not (John 1:11).

Another thing I must mention here. No where in the Holy Scripture one can find a verse that tells us that God promised Israel eternal life. God's promise to them was

**material** and two folded: (**increase in number** as the number of the stars in the sky as in Gen. 15:5, and the second is **the land** from the Euphrates to the Nile as in Gen. 15:18). That was His promise. But according to the New Covenant, God promised the believers **Eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord

**I rest my case.**