

# The Fellowship

## Believing and Belonging

NT Wright

This is a great article about what it means to be a part of the church from a biblical perspective. Check it out: <https://ntwrightpage.com/2016/04/04/believing-and-belonging/>



## The People of God in God's Perfect Plan

Bob Deffinbaugh

### Introduction

Today, as in the history of the ages, many claim to be numbered among the people of God. When the Lord Jesus came as Israel's Messiah, He informed the nation Israel that many who thought themselves to be the "people of God" were mistaken:

Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it. Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matthew 7:17-23).

Many professing "Christians" today mistakenly believe they are a part of God's people. Like their Jewish counterparts of years gone by, they believe they have done many good deeds in the name of God. The concept of the "people of God" is not well understood by those who believe themselves to be numbered among God's people.

The study of the "people of God" is important for several reasons. First, it is important because God's Word makes a point of the fact that God has chosen a people for His own possession and purposes. In the Old Testament, the "people of God" are those who are associated with God's purposes and promises related to Israel, and especially to the God of Israel. In the New Testament,

the “people of God” are those who have come to faith in Israel’s promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, and who are thus members of the body of Christ, the church. The Bible uses the same Old Testament terminology in referring to the Israelites as the “people of God” as it does for New Testament saints (compare Exodus 19:5-6 with 1 Peter 2:5, 9).

Second, we live in a very individualistic age. The focus of our society is inward, not outward. We urge people to act for their own benefit, and we suspect something is psychologically wrong when someone is concerned about the impact of their actions on others. The Bible’s emphasis on a “people of God” necessitates that we think and act collectively about our faith and duty and not just individually.

Third, some Christians emphasize the differences between Israel and the church so much that the similarities between these two groups are overlooked. While there are differences between Israel and the church, both groups play a similar role as the “people of God.” Studying the “people of God” highlights the way in which the church currently carries on many of the functions of the nation Israel.

Fourth, there is a great need for God’s people to be reminded anew of the basis for the creation and preservation of the “people of God” and of the responsibilities which accompany this great privilege.

Finally, the creation, preservation, and perfection of the “people of God” is one of the primary elements in God’s eternal plan for creation. From the beginning of time until now, God has been calling out a people for Himself. If we are to understand the plans and purposes of God, we must surely understand His purpose to create a “people of God” for His own possession.

In this lesson, we shall consider the “people of God” in the Old Testament and in the New. We will see that there has always been a “people of God.” We shall also see that the basis for being included among God’s people has always been the same and that the responsibilities are very similar. The dangers and temptations which threaten to keep God’s people from many of His blessings are also similar. Those who are God’s people are so because of His grace and not because of man’s good works. Let us heed well the Word of God as it speaks to us on the subject of the “people of God.”

## Covenant

Norman Solomon

Oxford, 9/2001

### Summary of The Argument

The main argument of this paper is that covenant language is one of several metaphors used in Bible and Jewish tradition to express relationships, in particular the relationships between God and Israel and between God and his creation. Confusion has been engendered by the failure to recognize the metaphorical nature of this language. Many theologians have spoken of “the covenant” as if the words referred to a unique metaphysical object, and that it was meaningful to argue about possession of this object. But this is to mistake poetry for doctrine. Once the metaphorical nature of covenant language is accepted it can be understood as conveying the self-understanding of Israel in relation to God, and it becomes possible without contradiction for other groups to use similar language to convey their own self-understanding.

We review the biblical sources, and some early rabbinic and modern Jewish interpretations. In the course of this several theses are derived. They are collected and rearranged as a concluding summary.

