



The Chosen People: Election, Paul and Second Temple Judaism
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"In what may be the best book yet written on early Jewish and Christian concepts of election, Chad Thornhill provides clear and compelling evidence for the view that election in early Jewish and Christian circles was both corporate and conditional, and that the focus of election language was not on the salvation of particular individuals from before the foundations of the world."

— **Ben Witherington III**, Jean R. Amos Professor of New Testament for Doctoral Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary

Corporate and Conditional Election

In this careful and provocative study, The Chosen People, Chad Thornhill considers how Second Temple understandings of election influenced key Pauline texts with sensitivity to social, historical and literary factors. While Paul is able to move beyond ancient categories of a collective view of election, Thornhill shows how he also follows these patterns.

A. Chadwick Thornhill (PhD, Liberty) is the chair of theological studies for Liberty University School of Divinity and an assistant professor of apologetics and biblical studies for the School of Divinity. Here he answers more questions related to the study of election and the chosen people.

What made you interested in the concept of election in Pauline studies?

Chad Thornhill: My interest in the issue of election was a theological one, and I was quite dissatisfied with much of what I had read on the subject. In exploring Jewish literature, the question kept recurring as to how Jewish thought patterns regarding election related to Paul's writings. That question led to the study and to this book.

One of my major interests is in the relationship between Judaism and early Christianity. The larger biblical-theological questions, particularly related to soteriological concerns, often seem to be examined backward from modern theology to early Christianity rather than by beginning with the Old Testament and Judaism as the proper lens. I hope this book can somewhat reorient the conversation in that direction. I have published a few articles related to this area and hope to do more work, particularly in the Gospels, on this and related issues.

How is election unique within Judaism?

Thornhill: Looking through the lens of Judaism, election was understood more as a collective idea (God's people) than an individual one. God chose to form a people, and those who met the "conditions" or who had the right "markers" were included in that people. Election is not portrayed as occurring on an individual level but on a corporate one. This has lots of implications for how we understand New Testament doctrine, and I would suggest it results in a more faithful reading of Paul's arguments in his key election passages.

How do you hope *The Chosen People* will impact the scholarly community?

Thornhill: The three major proposals in the book are that individual election is always role or character oriented, not soteriological; that election is primarily portrayed as a corporate concept rather than an individual one; and that Paul's central challenge to the Jewish concept is not the framework of election, but rather its focal point, which Paul argues is reoriented around Jesus.

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