



March 19, 2025

MESSENGER

THE CHOSEN AND THE CHOOSING

QUOTE FOR TODAY

" We **know** that God walks with us; we **know** that God's got us, that He has made a way for us before and that he is going to make a way for us now."

Pastor Connie in this week's sermon

INFO

Sermons are always available...catch up on the ones you haven't heard!
iTunes: bit.ly/AltadenaBaptistPodcast
On our website:
www.altadenabaptist.org/sermonaudio/

Also, check us out online:
On the web: www.altadenabaptist.org

Contact Information:

general office communication:
altabap@aol.com

prayer requests:
altabaprayer@aol.com

Connie Larson DeV Vaughn, pastor

George Van Alstine, associate pastor

ALTADENA BAPTIST CHURCH
791 E. Calaveras Street
Altadena, CA 91001-2447
(626) 797-8970

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 91055
Pasadena, CA 91109

The Comedian known as Modi (short for Mordechi Rosenfeld) was born into an Orthodox Jewish home in Israel. His family moved to New York when he was seven and raised him in a very observant kosher household. He used his natural gift for humor to poke gentle fun at his own people, and he became very successful entertaining at Orthodox Jewish events. Over time, his audience grew larger, and he became nationally known on the comedy circuit, as well appearing as a frequent supporting actor on television dramas.

In reflecting on his emergence from the narrow confines of performing only for Orthodox Jewish audiences, he described it in this way:

"My audience used to be **The Chosen**, but now I'm speaking more to **The Choosing**."

The Chosen, of course, is a reference to how the most observant Orthodox Jews would tend to see themselves. The Choosing is Modi's term for Jews who decide what part of Jewish tradition and practice they'll try to follow. As a matter of fact, Modi himself is an example; he's pretty careful about respecting traditional kosher food and behavior laws, but he wears modern clothes and has had secular jobs in the stock trade industry. And, by the way, he's gay and married to a man. So, he's definitely among The Choosing.

Modi's distinction rings a bell with me; I believe he's identified an important truth that can help us understand how all religions work. Take the Shakers, the Christian sect I wrote about in last week's article. In 1774 their founder Ann Lee taught that Christ was coming very soon and the end of the age could be at any moment. Their lifestyle reflected that belief. They lived together and pooled their belongings, existing from day to day on whatever food they could raise in their farms and gardens. They didn't marry or have sexual relations. They wore simple, modest clothes and made whatever basic furniture they needed.

Since the Second Coming didn't happen as quickly as they had hoped, and since they weren't bearing children in natural families, the Shakers' leaders realized their movement would quickly die out. To address this problem, they began to specialize in taking in orphans and the children of poor single mothers who couldn't afford to raise them.

continued on other side...

March 19, 2025

(Continued from other side)

Then the American Civil War began, and when it dragged on and became more and more deadly, the number of orphans housed by the Shakers increased dramatically, to the point where there were more children in the community than adults.

What a blessing! But there was a catch: when each child became 21, he or she was allowed to decide whether or not to remain. Some opted out. Many others wanted to stay; but . . . "I'd like to wear a little different color shirt once in a while"; or "Maybe I'd like to check out that new soda shop"; or "You mean I can't sit next to a girl on my front porch?" So, they began to compromise their long-held traditions. And soon there were two groups: The Chosen and The Choosing. And then some people began to go a little too far out and became Ultra-Choosers. You see where this all led: The Choosers began to go more and more hard right, until there was no one left who could meet the standards. In time the Shakers became nothing more than a quaint memory in church history books.

You can follow this pattern in all religious movements. In Roman Catholicism, for instance, there are ordained priests, as well as others who are called to be part of religious orders, monks or nuns. But there are also average Catholics who have been baptized and take Communion the required once-a-year, and they may cross themselves when they go into surgery or before they shoot a foul shot. The Chosen and The Choosing.

Modern Evangelical leaders consider themselves to be The Chosen, but it doesn't take much analysis to recognize that they've done a lot of Choosing to get to their position. They've selected what Biblical principles they will accept as binding and which they'll feel free to ignore. They'll condemn others for not selecting the same set of "fundamentals of faith" as their club has agreed are essential. Ironically, they overlook or minimize some of

Jesus' most basic teachings.

Here's my position. I don't want to be part of The Chosen, whether Modi's, or the Shakers', or the Evangelicals', because this always leads to hypocrisy and judgmentalism and self-delusion. Rather, I want to identify with The Choosing.

However, some modern popular preachers seem to be offering a cafeteria-style Gospel, where you select what you're in the mood for, based on your sweet tooth rather than on a nourishing diet. I believe that the Master Chef has already decided what's good for me. It's up to me to Choose what he Chooses. I want to Choose God's core message of salvation and hold onto it for dear life. Much of the rest is timebound tradition that can be treated as historical curiosity.

Pastor George Van Alstine