

# SALVATION

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To the Jew First  
And Also to the Gentile



*An Examination of the Biblical Narrative  
Beginning at Moses*

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ADRIAN DAVIS

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## *Dedication*

*To my mother,*

whose indelible example of resilience gave me the strength  
to pursue truth and withstand many trials.

*To my wife,*

who supported me wholeheartedly in my journey and taught me to  
laugh and enjoy life along the way.

*To my congregation,*

who helped me cultivate a culture of passion for the word of God.

*And to all who seek truth,*

wherever the word of God may lead.

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## About the Cover



The seven-branched menorah is one of the oldest symbols in Scripture. Its design was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai and described in detail in the Book of Exodus. Fashioned from a single piece of gold, with seven branches extending from one central shaft, it stood in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple in Jerusalem, where it burned continuously as a witness to God's covenant presence with Israel.

When the Romans destroyed the Temple in 70 AD, the menorah was carried off to Rome as a trophy of conquest. It appears on the Arch of Titus to this day, held aloft by soldiers. And yet the symbol did not perish with the Temple. It persisted in synagogue mosaics and catacombs across the Mediterranean, wherever the Jewish people were scattered. It survived Babylon, Rome, the Islamic caliphates, the Crusades, and the Holocaust. Today it appears on the coat of arms of the State of Israel. The lampstand that was carried out of Jerusalem has, symbolically, returned.

This is the narrative of the book you hold in your hands. God's covenant light was given to Israel through Moses. It was not extinguished by rebellion, exile, or the passage of centuries. It was not transferred to another people. It was not spiritualized into an abstraction. The promises that God made to Abraham, confirmed

at Sinai, and declared through the prophets remain exactly what they were when they were first spoken. They await their fulfilment in Christ.

The menorah was made from one piece of gold because the covenant people are one people, rooted in one promise, sustained by one God. The branches extend from a single shaft the same way the tribes extend from a single patriarch, the same way the wild branches are grafted into a single olive tree, the same way all the promises of God converge in a single Messiah. The light that radiates from the cover of this book is the light of that covenant: ancient, unbroken, and burning still.

# Foreword

I was fifteen years old, sitting in a biology class in Toronto, when my world shifted. The teacher was explaining how the human tongue works: how it positions food between the teeth, how it detects texture and temperature, how the entire process of chewing and swallowing is orchestrated with astonishing precision. He moved on to the digestive system, tracing the journey of food through organs that seemed designed with extraordinary purpose. And then, without breaking stride, he told us that all of this had evolved by chance. That human beings descended from primates, and before that from amphibians, and before that from something simpler still. There was no Creator. There was no design. There was no purpose. It simply happened.

I was stunned. Not because I was a religious young man. I was not. I did not pray. I did not come from a praying household. But everyone in my family believed in God. My parents believed. My aunts and uncles were all Christian. God was simply part of life, the way the sky was above and the ground was below. It never occurred to me that anyone thought otherwise. And here was a teacher, a man in authority, speaking with complete confidence, telling me that everything I had assumed about the world was wrong.

I can remember walking home from school that afternoon in a kind of daze. I had never encountered this idea before, and it

disoriented me in a way I could not have articulated at the time. Something foundational had been shaken.

Not long after, something else happened. I was coming out of the shower, drying myself off, and a thought struck me with a force that I can only describe as certainty. I did not evolve. I was created. The conviction was not the product of an argument or a book or a sermon. It was immediate and total. And if I was created, then there was a Creator. And if there was a Creator, then there was a purpose for my creation. I had to find out what it was.

From that day forward, at fifteen years old, I set out on a quest to understand the purpose of life.

I went to the adults I respected. I asked them directly: what is the purpose of life? Not one of them could answer me with a substantive, well thought out answer. I didn't want niceties that could be easily pierced. No one could give me deep meaning with certainty. That troubled me, but it did not anger me. What angered me was what came next. When I pressed them and asked, if you do not know, what are you doing to find out? Their answer was nothing. They told me I would get over it. That I would grow out of the question. That angered me deeply. I had been raised to respect my elders, but I found myself disappointed and disillusioned by people I had looked up to my entire life.

So I began searching on my own. In high school I took a course in world religions. Then I discovered the reference library in downtown Toronto, a vast building with an entire floor dedicated to religion and philosophy. I spent hours there, reading everything I could find. I read the Bhagavad Gita. I studied Hinduism, Buddhism, Rastafarianism, Islam and other philosophies. I read the texts and the commentaries and the histories. I was looking for the answer.

Meanwhile, school became intolerable. I had lost all interest in the curriculum. I was seventeen years old, sitting in a math class, watching the teacher write an algebraic formula on the board, and something inside me snapped. I thought: I will never use this. I stood up, walked out, and never went back.

What followed was a period I do not romanticise. I became homeless. I slept in a stairwell. I rode the subway indefinitely because I had nowhere to go. I approached strangers who had pity on me and would let me sleep on their couch or floor for a night. I moved from couch to couch, staying with people I barely knew, whoever was willing to take me in for a few nights. I was exposed to a side of Toronto I had never seen: drugs, guns, prostitution, the criminal underbelly of a major city. By God's grace, and by the moral compass my mother had given me, I did not get pulled in. I did not get into trouble. But I saw things that no young person should see, and I learned very quickly what happens when people live without purpose and without education.

For the next two years I was knocked around by life. I drove a taxi to survive. I fell behind in every measurable way. And eventually I came to the humbling realisation that I actually needed an education. I went back to school. But through all of it, the search never stopped. Every single day, I was searching. I was studying.

It was during this period that I began to read the Bible. And it began to make sense. Not all at once, not in a blinding flash, but slowly, steadily, passage by passage, the story emerged. I searched for anyone who could help me understand it. Along the way I encountered false teachers, manipulative people, and outright corruption. I also encountered good teachers, faithful men and women who pointed me in the right direction, and I am grateful for them.

Here I am now, forty-nine years later. Seven periods of seven years. And I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude to write this book.

This is the book I wish I had when I was fifteen years old. When I asked the adults in my life what the purpose of life was and no one could answer, I wish someone could have handed me this book. A book that explains God's purpose in plain, everyday language that is accessible to anyone with a desire to learn. I believe my fifteen-year-old self would have had a great deal of respect for the man that God has led me to become at sixty four. And my sixty-four-year-old self, looking back, would have a great deal of respect for that young man who took the question so seriously that he was willing to lose everything to find the answer.

And I did lose everything. I lost my education, my stability, my comfort, my standing. I lost years. But somewhere along the way, I came across a passage of Scripture that I found really comforting.

*"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."  
(Mark 10:29-30 KJV)*

That has been my experience exactly. I lost everything, and by God's grace, through Christ, I have been restored a hundredfold. I have a family, a calling, a congregation, and now the treasured knowledge in this book.

I cannot quite believe that God has given me the grace to do this: to explain what the Bible means in plain English, to trace the purpose of God in scriptures that are thousands of years old, from

Genesis to Revelation, and to answer the question that has driven my entire adult life. The purpose of life is found in the covenant faithfulness of God. It is found in His plan for Israel and, through Israel, for all the families of the earth. It is found in Christ, in whom all the promises of God are yes and amen.

I hope that this book will be as great a blessing to you as you read it as it has been to me as I wrote it. And as I reflect on the forty-nine years I have spent, and continue to spend, searching, studying, and labouring to understand the purposes of God, I can say only this: He is faithful. He has always been faithful. And beginning at Moses, He shows us why.

*Adrian Davis*

2026

P A R T I

*The Foundational Purpose*

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## **PART I**

### *The Foundational Purpose*

## **Chapter 1**

### *God on Trial*

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When my children were small, we lived in the country and had to drive some distance to get to Sabbath services. I hate being late. I do not like to keep people waiting. So on one occasion, I was driving a little fast, a bit over the speed limit, and I got pulled over. I received a speeding ticket.

I thought I should go to court to fight it, because I didn't see any signage posting the speed limit. I was driving in a rural area, and I wasn't sure what the speed limit was. So, I went to court.

Before I entered the courtroom, a Justice of the Peace approached me and said they were willing to negotiate the charge, to lower it so that I would not receive any demerit points and the fine would be less. I agreed. That was fine.

We went into the courtroom, and it was just like a factory. A whole line of people, the judge calling each case. He would ask, "Is there anything anybody would like to share?" They would say no, and he would move to the next. The judge, I should mention, was an older man, probably eighty-five years

old, pushing ninety. He was half asleep throughout the entire procedure. Hardly opened his eyes. You could tell he had done this for decades and he was on autopilot.

And then he got to me.

“Is there anything anybody would like to share?”

I said, “Yes.”

It sent a shockwave throughout the whole courtroom. The Justice of the Peace who had negotiated the deal with me looked up in disbelief. And the judge, who had been half asleep the entire time, suddenly woke up. He was excited that somebody actually had something to say.

I explained that I was going to church services, that I was running late, that the signage wasn't clear. He listened carefully. And then he said something I have never forgotten.

“You make a really good case. If this were a criminal case, I would be able to take your points into consideration. But this is the Highway Traffic Act. It is binary. You were either speeding, or you weren't. There is nothing I can do.”

Binary. Yes or no. No explanations allowed.

## The Bible Is a Legal Document

That traffic court experience taught me something I did not expect to learn that day. It taught me about the nature of divine judgment. Because what we are dealing with in the Scriptures is not philosophy, and not mere religion. We are dealing with a legal document.

We know it is a legal document because in Revelation 20, before the great white throne, in preparation for judgment, the books of the Bible are opened.

*“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” (Revelation 20:11–12 KJV)*

The Bible is entered into evidence. Every human being who has ever lived, but who was not included in the primary resurrection, will be judged out of this book.

*“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither*

*had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.” (Revelation 20:4–5 KJV)*

The standard in the White Throne judgment is binary. It is yes or no. It is true or false. There are no mitigating circumstances. There are no explanations allowed.

It’s just like the Highway Traffic Act.

Sometimes we read the Scriptures loosely. We treat them as a collection of inspirational sayings, moral guidelines, or ancient stories. We cannot afford to do this. The Scriptures are tight. They are precise. They are legally binding. And the courtroom in which they will be entered into evidence does not operate on a sliding scale. It operates on a binary: sentenced to life or sentenced to death.

The weight of this evidence is compounded by the nature of the document itself. The Bible was written by approximately forty different authors, across a span of roughly 1,500 years, on three continents, in three languages. These authors included kings, shepherds, fishermen, tax collectors, prophets, priests, a physician, and a tentmaker. They wrote in palaces and in prisons, in times of war and in times of peace, in seasons of prosperity and in seasons of exile. And yet, from Genesis to Revelation, the document tells one

story. One narrative. One legal case. The promises made in the earliest pages are fulfilled in the latest. The covenants established in the Torah are confirmed by the prophets, enacted by Christ, and consummated in the Revelation. No human committee could produce such a document. No editorial board spanning fifteen centuries could maintain such coherence. The unity of the Bible is itself evidence that it was authored by a single mind, and that the legal case it presents was constructed not by men but by the God who stands behind every word of it.

## **The Accusation**

This may sound shocking, but God is also on trial.

The accuser, the adversary, is not merely accusing you and me. He is accusing God. His fundamental accusation is this: Your God is unfaithful. Your God is a liar. Your God made promises, which He did not keep.

And unfortunately, unknowingly perhaps, many of us are in the courtroom supporting the adversary. If we have anything to do with replacement theology, we have adopted the position that the church has replaced Israel in the purposes of God. Sincerity notwithstanding, we are agreeing with the prosecution. We are saying that God made covenantal promises to a specific people, and then broke those promises to redirect them to another people.

We are, in effect, saying God is a liar.

This is the controversy at the centre of all Scripture. Not merely the controversy between Jew and Gentile, not merely the controversy between the church and the synagogue, but the controversy between God and His accuser. Did God keep His word, or did He not?

## **The Verdict Is Already Decided**

The Apostle Paul understood the stakes. Coming out of Romans 2, where he has been discussing who is a true Jew, he arrives at Romans 3 with the central question of the entire Bible:

*“For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.”* (Romans 3:3–4 KJV)

Here’s how the Complete Jewish Bible translates this passage:

*“If some of them were unfaithful, so what? Does their faithlessness cancel God’s faithfulness? Heaven forbid! God would be true even if everyone were a liar! as the Tanakh says, ‘so that you, God, may be proved right in your words and win the verdict when you are put on trial.’”* (Romans 3:3–4 CJB)

Read that last phrase carefully: that you might win the verdict when you are put on trial. Paul is quoting Psalm 51, where David, after his sin with Bathsheba, confesses that God is righteous in His judgments. David is the liar. David is the faithless one. God is true.

Paul now takes this principle and applies it to the entire nation. If the whole Jewish community is faithless and breaks covenant, does that mean God breaks covenant? The answer is emphatic: God forbid. Never say such a thing.

This is not a hope. It is not a prayer. It is a legal certainty. The evidence has already been entered. The writings are already in the record. And when the books are opened, every promise God made will be shown to have been kept, every word will be shown to have been true, and every accusation against His faithfulness will be shown to have been a lie.

### **The Courtroom of Isaiah 43**

The prophet Isaiah gives us the most vivid picture of this courtroom drama in all of Scripture. In Isaiah 43, God opens the proceedings. But before the trial begins, He makes a statement that narrows the aperture of everything that follows:

*“But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not:*

*for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.” (Isaiah 43:1 KJV)*

This is not addressed to all mankind. This is exclusively about Jacob. Exclusively about Israel. God created Israel. God formed Israel. God redeemed Israel. God called Israel by name.

The passage continues with a statement that will offend modern sensibilities: “I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee” (Isaiah 43:3). The value of the lives of Egyptians, Ethiopians, and the people of Seba is weighed against the value of Israel, and God says plainly: I will sacrifice them to redeem you. Human beings are not equal in the eyes of God when it comes to His covenant purposes.

Then God opens the courtroom:

*“Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.” (Isaiah 43:9 KJV)*

Let all the Gentile nations gather. Let them all assemble. God is not intimidated by numbers. He does not care how powerful they are. He does not care how many they are. Let them come. Let them make their case. Let them bring their witnesses. And

then let them look at the evidence and say: It is truth. Jeremiah saw this day.

*“O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.” (Jeremiah 16:19 KJV)*

And who are God’s witnesses?

*“Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.” (Isaiah 43:10 KJV)*

Israel is the witness. Open the Torah. Open the Tanakh. Show the Gentile people how everything that has happened has happened according to God’s word. You were faithless, but God kept covenant. You broke the agreement, but God did not. Tell them. Take the stand and testify.

## **Every Promise, Yea and Amen**

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, makes a statement that functions as the summary verdict of the entire biblical narrative:

*“For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”* (2 Corinthians 1:20 KJV)

Every promise. Not some. Not the ones we find convenient. Not the ones that fit a particular theological system. All the promises of God in Christ are yea and amen. They are confirmed. They are ratified. They are legally binding and irrevocable.

This means the promises to Abraham are yea and amen. The promises to Isaac and Jacob are yea and amen. The promise of a land, a nation, a priesthood, a kingdom, a throne, a regathering, a restoration, a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, every single one is yea and amen. Not one will fail.

If even one promise fails, God loses the verdict. If even one word returns void, the accuser wins. But Paul’s declaration is absolute: every promise stands.

## **Which Side of the Courtroom Are You On?**

The world, at its most fundamental level, is divided into two camps. Not Jew and Gentile. Not East and West. Not liberal and conservative. The division is simpler and more consequential than any of these:

Pro-covenant, or anti-covenant.

That's it. You are either for the covenant or against it. If you are pro-covenant, you might be a first fruit of the calling, you might be part of the fall harvest, or you might be a Gentile who recognizes and honours what God is doing through Israel. If you are anti-covenant, you might be Jewish, Israelite, or Gentile. It makes no difference. You are against what God has sworn to do.

Anti-covenant will be eliminated in the White Throne Judgment. The only humans that will remain in the world are pro-covenant. This is the outcome. This is the verdict. And the question for every reader of this book is: which side are you on?

## **The Purpose of This Book**

This book is an examination of the biblical narrative beginning at Moses. It traces the thread of God's covenant faithfulness from its foundational declaration at Sinai through the rebellion of Israel, the scattering of the tribes, the hardening in part that allowed for the inclusion of the Gentiles, and the prophesied restoration that will culminate in the return of the Messiah to Zion.

The thesis is straightforward: salvation is to the Jew first, but also to the Gentile. This is not a statement of ethnic superiority. It is a statement of covenantal architecture. God chose Israel as the vehicle through which He would redeem

the world. That vehicle was never replaced. It was never discarded. It was never superseded by a Gentile church. The Gentiles were grafted into what God was already doing through Israel, not the other way around. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, warned us against Replacement Theology.

*“For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise*

*in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:"*

(Romans 11:16–26 KJV)

If Moses were resurrected today, would he recognize the gospel we are preaching? When Christ rose from the dead and opened the Scriptures to His disciples, He did not start afresh. He began at Moses.

*"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."* (Luke 24:27 KJV)

He revealed what was there all along.

What gospel are we preaching? Does it match the one that was proclaimed from the beginning?

The courtroom is open. The evidence is being entered. Our decisions, conduct and preaching is being entered. God will win the verdict. The only question is whether we will be found on the right side of it.

## Chapter 2

# The Proto-Gospel and the Universal Need

Before there was a nation called Israel, before there was a man called Abraham, before there was a covenant at Sinai or a law written on tablets of stone, there was a problem. And the problem was universal.

Man had sinned.

The story of Scripture does not begin with Israel. It begins with Adam. It begins with a garden, a command, a transgression, and a curse. And embedded within that curse, spoken to the serpent in the hearing of the man and the woman, was the first whisper of the gospel:

*"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:15 KJV)*

Theologians call this the *protoevangelium*, the proto-gospel, the first announcement of good news. It is not yet a covenant. It is not yet a plan laid out in detail. It is a declaration of war. There will be enmity. There will be conflict. And the seed of the woman will

crush the head of the serpent, though he himself will be wounded in the process.

This is the earliest indication that God intends to redeem what has been lost. And notice carefully: it is universal. It is spoken over humanity as a whole, not to any particular nation or family. At this point in the narrative, there are no nations. There are no other families. There is only Adam, Eve, and the promise that the serpent will not have the final word.

## **The Scope of the Problem**

What follows in Genesis is a record of catastrophic decline. Cain murders Abel. Lamech boasts of violence. By the time we reach Genesis 6, the assessment is devastating:

*"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." (Genesis 6:5-6 KJV)*

Every imagination. Only evil. Continually. This is not a localized problem. This is not a cultural deficiency that could be corrected by education or reform. This is a species-wide corruption that grieves the heart of God Himself.

The flood is God's response. He wipes the slate clean and starts again with Noah and his family. But even this catastrophic reset does not solve the fundamental problem. Noah himself falls into sin almost immediately after the waters recede (Genesis 9:21). The table of nations in Genesis 10 spreads humanity across the earth, and by Genesis 11 they are building a tower in open rebellion against God's command to fill the earth. The pattern has not changed. And in our own day, we are witnessing depravity that defies the

imagination, conduct so debased that it challenges the very definition of what it means to be human. The flood did not fix it. A fresh start cannot fix it. The problem is not circumstantial. It is written into the nature of fallen man.

The lesson is clear: the problem is not environmental. It is not situational. It is internal. It is written into the nature of fallen man. And no reset, no judgment, no fresh start can solve it from the outside.

### **The Noahic Covenant: A Promise to All Flesh**

After the flood, God establishes a covenant with Noah. This is the first explicit use of the word *covenant* in Scripture, and its scope is remarkable:

*"And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth." (Genesis 9:9-10 KJV)*

This covenant is universal. It includes Noah, his descendants (which is to say, all of humanity), and every living creature on the earth. It is unconditional. God does not say, "If you obey me, I will not flood the earth again." He says, "I will not flood the earth again." The rainbow is the sign of a unilateral promise.

This is important for our purposes because it establishes a foundational principle: God made a promise to all of humanity. He is not indifferent to the nations. He does not begin His redemptive work with a narrow focus. He begins with the broadest possible scope, a covenant with *all flesh*.

So why, then, does He narrow?

## **The Strategic Narrowing**

This is the question that the rest of this book seeks to answer. If God's concern is universal, why does He choose one family? If the problem is global, why does the solution begin with a single man in Ur of the Chaldees?

The answer is not that God stopped caring about the nations. The answer is that God adopted a strategy.

Consider a physician treating a pandemic. The disease affects everyone. The need is universal. But the physician does not distribute the cure randomly across the entire population. He begins at a single point. He trains a team. He establishes a protocol. He creates a supply chain. And from that single point, the cure radiates outward until it reaches every person who needs it.

This is precisely what God does. The disease is sin. The need is universal. The cure is faith in God's word. But the distribution strategy begins at a single point: Abraham. And from Abraham, through Isaac, through Jacob, through the nation of Israel, the cure is meant to radiate outward until it reaches every family of the earth.

The Noachic covenant tells us that God has not forgotten the nations. The Abrahamic covenant, which we will examine in the next chapter, tells us *how* God intends to reach them. Not by going around Israel. Not by replacing Israel. But *through* Israel.

## **The Same Gospel from the Beginning**

One of the most consequential verses in all of Scripture is found in the book of Hebrews:

*"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not*

*being mixed with faith in them that heard it." (Hebrews 4:2 KJV)*

Read that again. The gospel was preached to *them*. To the generation that came out of Egypt with Moses. The same gospel. Not a different one. Not a preliminary version. Not a shadow of the real thing that would come later. The *same gospel* that we have received was preached to the patriarchs, to Moses, to the congregation in the wilderness.

This demolishes the idea that the Old Testament contains a different message than the New. It demolishes the idea that Israel was operating under a different program that was later replaced by the gospel of Christ. The gospel of Christ *is* the gospel that was preached from the beginning. Christ Himself confirmed this when He opened the Scriptures to His disciples after His resurrection:

*"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:27 KJV)*

He began at Moses. Not because Moses was merely a prelude, but because Moses was preaching the *same gospel*. Moses laid the foundation for all the prophets. The message from all the prophets is built upon, not in contradiction to, the Torah. The question is not whether the gospel was present in the Hebrew Scriptures. It was. The question is whether we have eyes to see it.

## **The Warning of a Different Gospel**

If the gospel has been the same from the beginning, then any gospel that contradicts what Moses taught is not merely incomplete. It is false. Paul's warning to the Galatians is absolute:

*"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."  
(Galatians 1:8-9 KJV)*

Accursed. Not mistaken. Not slightly off. *Accursed*. The severity of this language tells us that the integrity of the gospel is not a secondary issue. It is *the* issue. And if the gospel we are preaching cannot be found in Moses, cannot be traced through the prophets, and does not align with what Christ revealed when He opened the Scriptures beginning at Moses, then we are not preaching the gospel at all.

We are preaching something else. And we are under a curse.

## **From Universal Need to Strategic Solution**

The proto-gospel of Genesis 3:15 tells us that God's redemptive intention is for all of humanity. The Noahic covenant confirms that God has not abandoned the nations. But the Scriptures also make clear that the universal problem requires a specific solution, and that solution will be channelled through a specific people.

The need is universal. The strategy is particular. And the outcome, as we shall see, is universal again. All families of the earth will be blessed, but they will be blessed *through* the family that God chose to bless them.

In the next chapter, we will examine why God chose Abraham, what He promised him, and how that three-fold promise of a nation, a land, and a blessing to all families of the earth forms the foundation upon which the entire biblical narrative is built.

But the principle we must carry forward from this chapter is this: the gospel did not begin with Jesus of Nazareth walking the shores of Galilee. It did not begin with Paul on the road to Damascus. It did not begin at Pentecost. It began in a garden, in the hearing of a fallen man and woman, when God declared war on the serpent and promised that the seed of the woman would crush his head. Its particulars were established through the Mosaic covenant.

That is the gospel. It has always been the gospel. And if Moses were resurrected today, he would recognize it, because he preached it.

### Chapter 3

## The Choice of Israel as a Strategic Vehicle

Of all the questions that the Bible raises, perhaps none is more foundational than this: why Israel?

Why not Egypt, which was the most advanced civilization of its day? Why not Babylon, with its vast empire and sophisticated culture? Why not China, India, or any of the great peoples of the ancient world? Why did the Creator of the universe look upon a wandering Hebrew and say, "You. I will build my plan around you"?

The question is not merely academic. How we answer it determines how we read the rest of Scripture. If we believe God chose Israel arbitrarily, then His attachment to them can be set aside arbitrarily. If we believe He chose them because of some inherent merit, then we have misread the text entirely. But if we understand that God chose Israel *strategically*, as the vehicle through which He would accomplish a specific, eternal purpose, then we begin to understand why that choice is irrevocable.

## **The Call of Abraham**

The story begins not with a nation but with a man. In Genesis 12, God speaks to Abram in Ur of the Chaldees:

*"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3 KJV)*

Notice the structure. God does not say, "I am going to bless the whole world." He says, "I am going to bless *you*, and through you, the whole world." The blessing is universal in scope but particular in delivery. It flows through a channel, and the channel is Abraham and his seed.

This is the architectural blueprint of redemption. Everything that follows in Scripture, from Sinai to Calvary to the New Jerusalem, is the outworking of this single declaration. The promise to Abraham is the DNA of the gospel.

## **Not Because of Merit**

Moses himself addresses the question of why God chose Israel, and his answer is blunt:

*"The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of*

*bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."  
(Deuteronomy 7:7-8 KJV)*

God did not choose Israel because they were numerous. They were the fewest. He did not choose them because they were righteous. Moses will spend the rest of Deuteronomy reminding them of their stiff-necked rebellion. He chose them for two reasons: because He loved them, and because He made an oath to their fathers.

The love is sovereign. It is not earned and it cannot be forfeited by bad behaviour, because it was never granted on the basis of good behaviour. And the oath is irrevocable. God swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. He bound Himself by His own name. And God does not break His word.

This is critical to understand. The election of Israel is not based on Israel's performance. It is based on God's character. If it were based on performance, God could revoke it when Israel failed. But because it is based on His oath and His love, it stands regardless of what Israel does. This is exactly the argument Paul makes in Romans 11:

*"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."  
(Romans 11:29 KJV)*

Without repentance means without change of mind. God does not reconsider. He does not go back on His word. He does not look at Israel's failures and think, "Perhaps I should have chosen someone else." The election is final.

## **A Peculiar Treasure, a Kingdom of Priests**

At Sinai, before the law is given, God tells Moses what to say to the people:

*"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." (Exodus 19:5-6 KJV)*

Two phrases demand our attention. First, *a peculiar treasure above all people*. The Hebrew word is *segullah*. It refers to a king's personal treasure, his private collection, the most valuable thing he owns. Israel is not merely one nation among many in God's estimation. Israel is the treasure. The crown jewel. Set apart from and above all other peoples.

Second, *a kingdom of priests*. A priest stands between God and the people. He mediates. He teaches. He offers sacrifice. He brings the word of God to the people and the offerings of the people to God. If Israel is a kingdom of priests, then the question is: priests to whom? The answer is in the preceding clause: *for all the earth is mine*. Israel is the priesthood of the earth. Their role is to mediate between God and the nations.

This is the purpose of the election. God did not choose Israel so that Israel could hoard the blessings. He chose them to be the conduit through which His blessings reach everyone else. They are the priesthood. The nations are the congregation. And the service is the gospel.

## **A Light to the Nations**

Isaiah picks up this priestly language and expresses it in terms of light:

*"I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."  
(Isaiah 42:6-7 KJV)*

God will give Israel as a covenant to the people and a light to the Gentiles. The menorah in the tabernacle is the physical symbol of this reality. Seven branches, burning continually, illuminating the holy place. Israel is the lampstand. The light they carry is the knowledge of God, the Torah, the covenants, the promises, the gospel. And that light is not meant to stay in the holy place. It is meant to radiate outward into the darkness where the nations sit.

This is why the menorah is on the cover of this book. Not because it is a Jewish symbol, but because it represents the purpose for which Israel was chosen: to carry the light of God to a world sitting in darkness. The light belongs to God. The lampstand is Israel. And the darkness is the condition of every nation that has not yet received it.

## **The Danger of Removing the Lampstand**

If Israel is the lampstand, then what happens when we remove Israel from the equation? What happens when we adopt a theology that says God has set Israel aside and transferred their role to the church?

We remove the lampstand.

Christ warned the church at Ephesus of this very thing:

*"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:5).*

The candlestick, the lampstand, can be removed. But it is removed as a consequence of *departure from the original foundation*, not as a planned upgrade.

Replacement theology does not elevate the church. It cuts the church off from the root that sustains it. Paul makes this explicit in Romans 11 when he warns the Gentile believers:

*"Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee" (Romans 11:18).*

The root is Israel. The patriarchs. The covenants. The promises. If the Gentile church severs itself from that root, it does not grow stronger. It withers.

## **An Irrevocable Choice**

The choice of Israel is not a phase in God's plan. It is the plan. It was not a temporary arrangement that served its purpose and was then replaced by something better. It is the permanent architecture of redemption.

God chose a man, Abraham. From that man, He built a family. From that family, He formed a nation. To that nation, He gave a law, a land, a priesthood, a temple, prophets, kings, covenants, and promises. Through that nation, He brought forth the Messiah. And through that Messiah, He will redeem the world. Every step of this process flows through Israel. Not one step bypasses them.

When Christ returns, He returns to Jerusalem, not to Rome, not to Geneva, not to any Gentile city. He returns to Zion. He sets His feet on the Mount of Olives. He defends Jerusalem. He restores the throne of David. He gathers the outcasts of Israel from the four corners of the earth. And from that restored nation, operating as the kingdom of priests they were always meant to be, the knowledge of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The vehicle was never replaced. It was never discarded. It broke down, yes. It was scattered, yes. But God is in the business of restoration, not replacement. And the vehicle He chose in Genesis 12 is the same vehicle He will use to deliver the final product of redemption to every nation, tongue, and people.

In the next chapter, we will examine the specific terms of the promise God made to Abraham, the three-fold covenant that forms the bedrock of everything Scripture builds upon: a great nation, a specific land, and the blessing of all families of the earth.

## Chapter 4

# The Abrahamic Foundation

Everything in Scripture rests on what God said to one man in Ur of the Chaldees. If we misunderstand the Abrahamic covenant, we will misunderstand the rest of the Bible. We will misunderstand Sinai. We will misunderstand the prophets. We will not understand the gospel. And we will not understand the book of Revelation. God's plan of redemption begins here.

God made a promise to Abraham. And that promise was not vague, it was not general, and it was not open to reinterpretation. It was specific. It was binding. And it was eternal. Every prophetic utterance that follows, every act of divine intervention in history, every judgment, every mercy, every restoration, is the outworking of what God swore to this one man.

## The Three-Fold Promise

Let us read it carefully:

*"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy*

*name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3 KJV)*

There are three components to this promise, and all three are critical. If you remove any one of them, the entire structure collapses.

First: *a land*. God tells Abraham to leave his country and go to a land that God will show him. This is not a spiritual land. This is not a metaphor. This is a physical piece of real estate on this earth that God promises to give to Abraham and his descendants. And when God later specifies the boundaries of that land, He is precise about it. From the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18). This is a specific territory with specific borders.

Second: *a nation*. God says, "I will make of thee a great nation." Not a philosophy. Not a religion. Not a spiritual movement. A nation. A people with a government, a law, a territory, a priesthood, and a king. This is a political entity that God Himself is going to build from the seed of one man.

Third: *a blessing to all families of the earth*. This is the purpose. The land is the platform. The nation is the vehicle. And the purpose is that through this nation, in this land, all families of the earth will be blessed. Not some families. All families. The blessing is universal, but the delivery mechanism is particular. It flows through Abraham. It flows through his seed. It flows through the nation that God builds from that seed, in the land that God has given to that nation.

This is the architecture. This is the blueprint. And everything that follows in Scripture is either the construction of this building or the repair of it when it gets damaged. But the blueprint never changes.

## **God Swears by Himself**

Now, a promise is one thing. An oath is another. And what God does in Genesis 15 elevates this promise to a level that cannot be broken by any power in heaven or on earth.

*"And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:" (Hebrews 6:15-18 KJV)*

Abraham asks a reasonable question: "Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" (Genesis 15:8). How will I know? Give me some assurance. And God's response is extraordinary.

He tells Abraham to bring a heifer, a she goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. Abraham cuts the animals in half and lays the pieces opposite each other, creating an aisle of blood between them. This is the Ancient Near Eastern covenant ritual. When two parties walk between the pieces, they are saying: "May what happened to these animals happen to me if I break this covenant." It is a blood oath.

But here is what makes this covenant unlike anything else in all human history. Abraham does not walk through the pieces. God puts Abraham into a deep sleep.

*"And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. 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:" (Genesis 15:17-18  
KJV)*

God alone walks through the pieces. God alone takes the oath. God alone assumes the consequences of covenant failure. Abraham was in a deep sleep. He was not a party to the oath. He cannot break it, because he never swore it. This is a unilateral, unconditional, self-binding oath by the Creator of the universe to one man.

Do you see what this means? It means that the faithfulness of this covenant does not depend on Abraham. It does not depend on Isaac. It does not depend on Jacob. It does not depend on the tribes of Israel. It depends entirely on God.

But here is where we need to understand the relationship between the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant, because this is where the legal drama of Scripture reaches its crisis point.

The Mosaic covenant was not a replacement of the Abrahamic covenant. It was the specific mechanism by which God intended to fulfill it. God promised Abraham a nation, a land, and a blessing to all families of the earth. At Sinai, God laid out the terms by which that nation would operate in the Promised Land and become that blessing. The law, the priesthood, the sacrificial system, the holy days, the code of holiness, all of it was the operational framework for delivering on the Abrahamic promise.

But unlike the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant was conditional. It was bilateral. God said plainly: if you obey, blessings; if you disobey, curses. And He spelled out both in devastating detail in Deuteronomy 28 and 29. The blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience are laid out side by side, and the nation was given a choice.

Israel chose poorly. They broke the covenant. They violated the code of holiness. And in doing so, they did not escape from the

binding nature of the covenant; they disqualified themselves from inheriting the blessings of the Mosaic covenant and instead activated its curses. The exile, the scattering, the subjugation by foreign powers, the destruction of the temple, every single curse that fell on Israel was not evidence of God abandoning His people. It was evidence of God keeping His word. Every curse was a demonstration of God's covenant faithfulness. God said He would do it, and He did it. In Him, all the promises are yes and amen, including the difficult ones.

But this created a legal conundrum. God had sworn an unconditional oath to Abraham (a land, a nation, a blessing to all families of the earth). That oath was sealed in blood and sworn by God's own name. It could not be revoked. And yet, the vehicle through which that oath was to be fulfilled, the nation of Israel, operating under the Mosaic covenant, had disqualified itself. The very people who were supposed to inherit the promises had activated the covenantal curse clauses instead. God was now legally unable to fulfil the Abrahamic oath through a nation that stood condemned under the Mosaic law.

This is why Christ had to come. Not as a generic saviour for a generic world, but as "the Holy One of Israel" (a term used 25 times by the prophet Isaiah). He came as an Israelite, born under the law, and He lived a pure and Torah-compliant life. He was Israel's Passover sacrifice. Every commandment that Israel broke, He kept. Every standard that Israel failed to meet, He met. He was the successful representative of the nation. The one Israelite who fulfilled the Mosaic covenant perfectly and therefore qualified to inherit its blessings.

And having qualified, He did something that defies human comprehension. He took upon Himself the entire death penalty that Israel had incurred. Every curse of Deuteronomy 28 and 29 that was

hanging over the nation, He absorbed. The oath-taker of Genesis 15 was torn apart on a hill outside Jerusalem, not because God was unfaithful, but because Israel was, and the only way to maintain the Abrahamic oath and satisfy the Mosaic justice simultaneously was for the oath-taker Himself to pay the price for Israel.

The cross is not a new plan. The cross is the Abrahamic covenant being honoured at infinite cost. Christ paved the way for Israel to inherit the promises, providing they accept Him as their personal Passover saviour. He is truly Israel's saviour. And by saving Israel, He ensured salvation for all families of the earth, exactly as God swore to Abraham.

*"But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 15:24 KJV)*

In Him, all the promises of God are yes and amen.

## **A Specific Land**

We need to talk about the land, because the land is where replacement theology does some of its most damaging work. The argument goes something like this: the promises of land were fulfilled in Joshua's time, or they were spiritualized in Christ, or the church is now the "true Israel" and the land promises no longer apply literally. But this does not hold up to even a casual reading of Scripture.

God specifies the land in Genesis 15:18-21. He names the peoples currently occupying it. He gives boundaries. He repeats the promise to Isaac (Genesis 26:3) and to Jacob (Genesis 28:13). He tells Moses He is bringing Israel into that specific land (Exodus 3:8). And even after Israel has entered the land and been expelled from it, God says through every major prophet, beginning at Moses, that He will bring them back *to that same land*.

*"And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers."  
(Deuteronomy 30:5 KJV)*

This is what Moses taught Israel, before they crossed the Jordan, declaring that they will be scattered and then brought back upon heartfelt repentance. The same land. Not a different one. Not a spiritual one. The same land which their fathers possessed. And he says when God does this, He will multiply them above their fathers. This has not yet happened. This is future. This is unfulfilled prophecy that awaits the return of Christ.

If we spiritualize the land, we unravel the covenant. Because the land is one of the three legs of the Abrahamic promise. Remove it, and the stool collapses. And if the land promise can be spiritualized away, then why not the nation? And if the nation can be spiritualized away, then why not the blessing? And if God's promises can be changed, then they can also be broken. Suddenly we have no covenant at all. We have a God who makes promises in specific terms and then fulfils them in terms so different that the original recipient would not recognise them. That is not faithfulness. That is deception. In the business world, it's called bait and switch. It's a deceptive sales practice in which a business promotes one product to attract customers and then persuades them to purchase a different, usually less desirable, option. The "bait" is the appealing offer that draws attention. The "switch" occurs when the customer is told the original offer is no longer available and is redirected to something else. It's a deceptive and unscrupulous business practice.

## **A Specific Seed**

God's promise is not only to a specific land; it is through a *specific* seed. And God is careful, throughout Genesis, to narrow the line through which the promise will flow.

Abraham had two sons: Ishmael and Isaac. The promise went through Isaac, not Ishmael (Genesis 21:12). Isaac had two sons: Esau and Jacob. The promise went through Jacob, not Esau (Genesis 25:23). Jacob had twelve sons, and from those twelve sons come the twelve tribes of Israel. This is the nation. From these twelve sons, Judah was chosen as the line through which the Messiah would come. This is the seed. This is the vehicle.

God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He did not choose Ishmael. He did not choose Esau. He chose Isaac, and He chose Jacob. And if we are offended by this, if we think this is unfair, we need to be very careful with that offence. Because that sense of unfairness, that belief that God must distribute His favour equally, is precisely the nerve that Satan will tap at the end of this age and at the end of the Millennium (Matthew 24.21, Rev 20.8-10). It is pride that says, "Why them and not us?" And it is the root of every rebellion against God's sovereign choice, from Cain to Korah to the nations that surround Jerusalem at the end of the Millennium.

Paul addresses this directly:

*"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (Romans 9:14-16 KJV)*

Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. God chooses. God selects. God narrows. He does everything to benefit all who will

accept His will. And we say amen to that, or we will find ourselves on the wrong side in the courtroom.

## **A Blessing to All Families**

The third component of the promise is the one that people most love to quote and least understand. "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

This is taken by many as proof that the Abrahamic covenant is really about everyone, that it was always universal, and that the focus on Israel is merely a temporary stage that gives way to a global, undifferentiated blessing. But this misreads the text entirely.

The blessing is universal in scope. Yes. All families. But the blessing flows *through* Abraham. It flows through his seed. It flows through the nation. The universality of the destination does not erase the particularity of the source. The whole world benefits, but the whole world benefits *because of Israel*, not instead of Israel.

Think of it this way. A fountain supplies water to an entire city. Every household benefits. But if you destroy the fountain, the water stops. You do not get the water by denying the fountain exists, or by claiming that the pipes have replaced the fountain, or by saying that the fountain served its purpose and is no longer needed. The fountain is the source. Destroy it, and you destroy the supply.

For the rest of mankind, Israel is the fountain. The blessing is the water. The nations are the city. And replacement theology is the theology that says we can cut off the fountain and still have water. It cannot be done. The blessing to all families of the earth flows through Abraham, through his seed, through the nation of Israel, forever. Remove Israel, and the blessing stops.

## **Confirmed and Reconfirmed**

God does not make this promise once and leave it. He confirms it. Again and again. To Abraham in Genesis 12, in Genesis 15, in Genesis 17, and in Genesis 22. To Isaac in Genesis 26. To Jacob in Genesis 28 and Genesis 35. And then through Moses, through the prophets, through the Psalms, and ultimately through Christ Himself.

In Genesis 22, after Abraham demonstrates his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, God says:

*"And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." (Genesis 22:16-18 KJV)*

By Myself have I sworn. There is no higher authority for God to swear by. He swears by Himself. The author of Hebrews makes this point explicitly:

*"For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself" (Hebrews 6:13).*

There is no higher court of appeal. There is no authority that can overturn this. God has bound Himself, by His own name, to a specific people, a specific land, and a specific purpose.

And, as I've mentioned already, the author of Hebrews tells us *why* God did this:

*"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:" (Hebrews 6:17-18 KJV)*

Two immutable things: His promise and His oath. Both unchangeable. Both impossible to break. And the purpose is that *we* might have strong consolation. That *we*, who have been grafted into Israel, might have confidence. That when the world shakes, when empires rise and fall, when the covenant people are scattered and persecuted, we can look at the Abrahamic covenant and say: God swore. God cannot lie. In Him, all the promises are yes and amen.

## **The Foundation That Cannot Be Moved**

This is the foundation. A specific land, given to a specific people, for a specific purpose that encompasses the whole earth. And the whole thing is secured not by human faithfulness, but by a divine oath that cannot be broken.

Every promise that follows in Scripture is built on this foundation. The covenant at Sinai, which we will examine in the next chapter, does not replace the Abrahamic covenant. It builds on it. The Mosaic law does not introduce new terms that override what God swore to Abraham. It adds a layer of detail, a code of holiness, a set of conditions for *blessing within the land*. But the land itself, the nation itself, the purpose itself, these were established by an oath that predates Sinai by centuries and will outlast every human institution on this earth.

The Abrahamic covenant is the bedrock. Sinai is the building. The prophets are the blueprints for renovation when the building is damaged. And the New Covenant, as we shall see, is the final reconstruction, carried out by the original Architect, on the same foundation, with the same people, in the same land.

The foundation cannot be moved. Because God swore by Himself. And it is impossible for God to lie.

P A R T   I I

*The Covenant at Sinai and  
the Reality of Rebellion*

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*Chapter 5*

# **The Terms of the Mosaic Covenant**

God brought Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand. He parted the sea. He drowned the armies of Pharaoh. He led His people through the wilderness with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. And He brought them to the foot of a mountain, where He was about to do something that had never been done before in the history of the world.

He was going to enter into a formal, legally binding, bilateral covenant with an entire nation. Not just with one man, as He had done with Abraham, but with the whole nation. And the terms of that covenant would govern everything: how they worshipped, how they governed themselves, how they treated one another, how they related to the nations around them, and what would happen to them if they obeyed or if they disobeyed.

This is Sinai. And if we do not understand what happened at Sinai, we will not understand anything that comes after it. We will not understand the exile. We will not understand the prophets. We will not understand the cross. And we will not understand the New Covenant, because the New Covenant is not a departure from Sinai. It is the fulfilment of what Sinai was always pointing toward.

## **The Marriage Proposal**

Before a single commandment was given, God made a proposal. He laid out the terms in advance, and He waited for Israel's response:

*"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." (Exodus 19:5-6 KJV)*

Notice the conditional language. *If* you will obey. *If* you will keep my covenant. *Then* you shall be a peculiar treasure. This is fundamentally different from the Abrahamic covenant. When God made His oath to Abraham, He put Abraham to sleep and walked through the pieces alone. There were no conditions. There was no "if." God bound Himself unilaterally.

But here at Sinai, God is proposing a bilateral arrangement. He is saying: I have already bound myself to your fathers. That is settled. But now, if you want to function as my kingdom of priests, if you want to enjoy the blessings of being my peculiar treasure in the land I am giving you, here are the terms. This is the operational framework. This is how the Abrahamic promise gets delivered.

And Israel accepted God's proposal. Exodus 19:8: *"All that the LORD hath spoken we will do."* They agreed to the terms. They entered the covenant willingly. And from that moment forward, they were eternally bound by what they had agreed to.

## **The Law Was a Gift**

We need to correct a misunderstanding that has plagued Christianity for centuries. The law was not a burden. The law was not a punishment. The law was not the opposite of grace. The law was a gift.

Moses himself said so:

*"And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deuteronomy 4:8 KJV)*

What nation is so great? Moses was not apologising for the law. He was boasting about it. He was saying: look at what God has given us. No other nation on earth has anything like this. This law is righteous. This law is just. This law reflects the character of the God who gave it.

The Psalmist understood this. Psalm 19:7-11 is a love poem to the Torah. *"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes."* David didn't see the law as a burden. He saw it as the wisdom of God, given to a people that God loved, to show them how to live in His presence and how to be a light to the nations.

Paul confirmed this in Romans 7:12: *"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."* The law is not the problem. It was never the problem. The problem is the human heart that cannot keep it. And that is precisely the problem that the New (or better translated as "renewed") Covenant was designed to solve, not by abolishing the law, but by writing it on the heart.

## **The Worship System**

God did not merely give Israel a set of moral instructions. He gave them an entire worship system. A tabernacle. A priesthood. Sacrifices. Holy days. Rituals of purification. Every detail was specified, down to the materials of the curtains and the ingredients of the incense. Nothing was left to human invention.

And every element of that system pointed to something. The Passover lamb pointed to Christ. The Day of Atonement pointed to Christ's atoning work. The Feast of Trumpets pointed to His return. The Feast of Tabernacles pointed to the Millennium. The menorah, the showbread, the veil, the ark of the covenant, all of it was a physical representation of spiritual realities that would be fulfilled in Christ.

This is what the author of Hebrews meant when he wrote that the tabernacle was "*a shadow of heavenly things*" (Hebrews 8:5). The worship system was not the substance. It was the shadow. But you do not discard the shadow and claim you still have the substance. The shadow tells you the shape of what is coming. And the shape of what was coming was always Christ, fulfilling the covenant, beginning at Moses.

## **The Holy Days: God's Prophetic Calendar**

Of all the elements of the Mosaic system, the holy days deserve particular attention, because they are not merely rituals. They are a prophetic calendar. They tell the story of redemption from beginning to end, and they were given to Israel as a roadmap of what God intended to accomplish.

There are seven annual holy days, divided into two seasons: the spring festivals and the fall festivals.

The spring festivals, Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost, were fulfilled at Christ's first coming. Christ was crucified on Passover. He was in the grave and rose to present Himself to God the Father during the Days of Unleavened Bread. And the Holy Spirit was given on the Day of Pentecost. These were not coincidences. These were the precise fulfilment of prophetic

appointments that God had established through Moses more than fourteen hundred years before Christ was born.

The fall festivals, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles, remain unfulfilled. They point to events that are yet future. Trumpets represents the return of Christ as the Lord of Hosts, coming to crush the enemies of Israel and to save His people.

*"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." (Zechariah 12:2-3 KJV)*

Atonement represents the reconciliation of God with Israel the at-one-ment, when all of Israel is forgiven and accepted through Christ.

*"For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." (Isaiah 43:3-7 KJV)*

And Tabernacles represents the ingathering, when God dwells with His people in Jerusalem and the Gentile nations come to learn the law of the Lord.

*"The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD." (Isaiah 2:1-5 KJV)*

Do you see the order? First, the enemies are crushed. Then, God is reconciled with Israel. Then, the nations are brought in. Not the other way around. The nations do not come in first. The nations are not brought to God before Israel is. The sequence matters. It was established in the holy day sequence, beginning at Moses, and it will be fulfilled exactly as it was laid out.

## **The Blessings and the Curses**

God did not leave Israel guessing about what would happen if they obeyed or disobeyed. He spelled it out in Deuteronomy 28 and 29 with a specificity that is staggering.

The blessings for obedience are comprehensive. Prosperity in the land. Victory over enemies. Abundance in every endeavour. Rain in due season. Health. Honour among the nations.

*"The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee" (Deuteronomy 28:9-10).*

This is what it looked like when the vehicle was running properly. Israel obeys, Israel prospers, and the nations see it and fear the God of Israel. That was the plan.

But the curses for disobedience are equally specific, and they are terrifying. Disease. Drought. Defeat. Madness. Siege. Famine so severe that parents would eat their own children (Deuteronomy 28:53). Scattering among the nations. Perpetual fear. No rest. Trembling hearts. Failing eyes. And the most devastating curse of all:

*"And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other" (Deuteronomy 28:64).*

Now, here is what we must understand. Every single one of these curses came to pass. The Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom in 722 BC, when the ten tribes were torn from the land and scattered across the empire, never to return as a unified body. The siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The destruction of Solomon's temple. The exile to Babylon. The horror of the Roman siege in 70AD, where Josephus recorded that parents did indeed eat their children, exactly as Moses had warned (Leviticus 26.29). The destruction of the second temple. The scattering among the nations that followed. The Islamic caliphates that seized Jerusalem in 638 AD and subjugated the covenant people for some thirteen hundred and fifty years; from the Rashidun and Umayyad caliphates, through the Abbasids, the Fatimids, the Crusader interruptions, the

Mamluks, and finally the Ottoman Empire, which ruled over Jerusalem for six hundred years until the British mandate in 1917. (Thirteen centuries of brutal subjugation that we somehow overlook when we discuss the sufferings of Israel.) The pogroms in Europe. The expulsions. The Inquisition. The ghettos. The Holocaust. Every nightmare that the people of Israel have endured across nearly three thousand years was written in advance, beginning at Moses, in Deuteronomy 28.

And this is not evidence that God abandoned Israel. This is evidence that God keeps His word. He said He would do it, and He did it. The curses, as terrible as they are, are proof of covenant faithfulness. God is not a liar. He told them what would happen, and it happened. In Him, all the promises are yes and amen, including the ones that bring tears.

## **Punished, but Not Destroyed**

But there is a limit. And this is where the distinction between the Mosaic covenant and the Abrahamic covenant becomes critical.

The curses of the Mosaic covenant could strip Israel of every blessing. They could scatter the nation to the ends of the earth. They could bring suffering on a scale that defies comprehension. But they could not destroy Israel entirely. Because underneath the Mosaic covenant, holding everything together, was the Abrahamic oath, which is unconditional, unilateral, sworn by God Himself. The Mosaic curses operated *within* the Abrahamic framework, not outside of it.

God said this explicitly through Jeremiah:

*"Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished."  
(Jeremiah 30:10-11 KJV)*

Read that carefully. God will make a full end of the Gentile nations that persecuted Israel. A full end. Complete destruction. But He will *not* make a full end of Israel. He will correct them in measure. He will punish, but He will not destroy. Because the Abrahamic oath prevents it. God swore to Abraham that his seed would be as the stars of heaven, that they would possess the land, and that through them all families of the earth would be blessed. If God destroyed Israel entirely, He would break His own oath. And God cannot lie.

This is the legal architecture of Scripture. The Abrahamic covenant is the foundation. The Mosaic covenant is the building. The building can be damaged. The building can be torn down. But the foundation remains. And on that foundation, God will rebuild. Beginning at Moses, this was always the plan. Every prophet builds on Moses. They amplify Moses's teachings. They add more colour and texture. No true prophet or teacher contradicts Moses.

## **The Pattern: Blessing, Rebellion, Curse, Restoration**

I have been doing a weekly Line Upon Line Bible Study (now on the [Rumble.com](https://www.rumble.com) platform) for the past eight years. Over the years, as

we've read the historical and prophetic books of the Bible, we see a pattern that repeats over and over. God blesses Israel. Israel prospers. Israel becomes proud. Israel turns to idolatry. God sends prophets to warn them. They ignore the prophets. God brings the curses. Israel suffers. Israel cries out. God restores them. And the cycle begins again.

This is not random. This is the Mosaic covenant operating exactly as it was designed. Blessing for obedience. Curse for disobedience. And underneath it all, the Abrahamic promise that guarantees restoration even after the worst curse has fallen.

The prophets understood this pattern, because they understood what Moses taught. Isaiah saw it. Jeremiah saw it. Ezekiel saw it. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, they all saw the same pattern. And every one of them, without exception, ended with restoration. No prophet closes with destruction alone. Every prophetic book that addresses Israel's sin also addresses Israel's restoration. Because the prophets knew what Moses knew: the curses are real, but they are not final. The Abrahamic oath stands. God will punish, but He will not utterly destroy. And He will bring His people back to the land, back to Himself, and back to their calling as His kingdom of priests.

Beginning at Moses, the pattern was established. The prophets confirmed it. And Christ will fulfil it.

## **What Sinai Was Always Pointing Toward**

The Mosaic covenant was never meant to be the final arrangement. It was a tutor, as Paul called it (Galatians 3:24). It taught Israel what holiness looked like. It showed them what they could not achieve in their own strength. And it pointed, in every detail, to the One who would achieve it on their behalf.

The sacrificial system taught that sin required blood. The Day of Atonement taught that the nation's sin had to be dealt with corporately, not just individually. The Passover lamb taught that deliverance came through the death of an innocent substitute. Every thread in the fabric of the Mosaic system led to Christ.

But the Mosaic covenant also taught something else. Something that Moses himself declared before Israel had even crossed the Jordan:

*"And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."  
(Deuteronomy 30:6 KJV)*

Moses knew. He knew that the law written on tablets of stone would not be enough. He knew that Israel would fail. He knew the curses would come.

*"For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands."  
(Deuteronomy 31:29 KJV)*

And he knew that God would eventually do what Israel could not do for themselves: circumcise their hearts. Write the law not on stone but on the human heart, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the New Covenant. And Moses saw it before Israel had taken a single step into the Promised Land.

In the next chapter, we will see what happened when Israel broke the covenant, and how God responded.

## Chapter 6

# The Bill of Divorce

After the death of King Solomon, the glory of Israel's united kingdom, the temple, the international alliances, the wealth that made silver as common as stones in Jerusalem, all of it now depended on a decision by one man. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, stood before the assembled tribes at Shechem, and they put a simple question to him: Will you lighten the burden your father placed on us? If so, we will serve you.

It was a test. Not merely of political judgment, but of the kind of leadership that would determine whether the covenant people remained one nation under God. Rehoboam rejected the counsel of the elders who had served his father and listened instead to the young men who had grown up with him. Their advice was reckless:

*"And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." (1 Kings 12:10-11 KJV)*

With those words, the united kingdom of Israel was torn in two. Ten tribes to the north rallied behind Jeroboam son of Nebat; Judah and Benjamin remained with the house of David in Jerusalem. It was a catastrophe of the first order. The visible shattering of the nation that God had built to be His dwelling place on earth.

Yet the text is careful to tell us there was a divine purpose behind this development.

*"And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee:" (1 Kings 11:30-31 KJV) "Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat." (1 Kings 12:15 KJV)*

The cause was from the LORD. This is a statement that should stop us in our tracks. God Himself divided the kingdom. The tearing of the nation was not a failure of His plan. It was an act of His sovereign hand, an expression of covenant faithfulness even in the form of judgment. He had warned Solomon directly, and now the consequence was unfolding exactly as He said it would.

## **Jeroboam's Fatal Choice**

God gave the northern kingdom to Jeroboam, a servant of Solomon of the tribe of Ephraim. The kingdom was given to Jeroboam with a remarkable promise: if he would walk in God's statutes and keep His commandments, as David had done, God would build him a sure house and give him Israel (1 Kings 11:38). The offer was

extraordinary. Jeroboam had the opportunity to rule the ten tribes with the same covenantal blessing that had rested on David. All he had to do was remain faithful.

He did not. Jeroboam's first act as king was to commit a sin so fundamental that it would define the entire history of the northern kingdom. He was afraid that if the people continued going up to Jerusalem to worship at the temple, their hearts would turn back to Rehoboam. So, he took counsel and made two golden calves, setting one up in Bethel and the other in Dan, and declared to Israel:

*"Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." (1 Kings 12:28 KJV)*

The echo of Aaron's sin at Sinai is unmistakable. The very same words. The very same idolatry. But Jeroboam went further. He built houses on high places, appointed priests from among the common people who were not of the sons of Levi and ordained a feast in the eighth month, which was a counterfeit of the Feast of Tabernacles, which God had commanded in the seventh month. He devised this, the text says, *of his own heart* (1 Kings 12:33). He replaced the true worship system entirely: false gods, false priests, false holy days, a false calendar. It was a comprehensive rejection of the covenant.

This was not merely a political miscalculation. It was a repudiation of the very terms under which God had constituted Israel as a nation at Sinai. The northern kingdom, under Jeroboam's leadership, set up a rival worship system that severed its people from the priesthood, the temple, and the holy days that God had given through Moses. Every subsequent king of the northern kingdom continued in this original sin. The prophets refer to it relentlessly: he walked *in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin*

*wherewith he made Israel to sin* (1 Kings 15:34). It became the defining indictment of the entire northern dynasty.

## **The Migration of the Faithful**

But something else happened when Jeroboam rejected the priesthood; something that would prove critical for the survival of the covenant people and the continuity of God's promises. The faithful departed. They packed up their possessions and moved south.

*"And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts. For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD: And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made. And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers." (2 Chronicles 11:13-16 KJV)*

Notice what the text says: *out of all the tribes of Israel*. This was not a migration limited to Levites. Faithful Israelites from every tribe (people who set their hearts to seek the LORD) left their lands in the north and relocated to Judah. They chose the true God over tribal loyalty, the temple over convenience, the covenant over geography.

This migration was not a one-time event. It continued in successive waves throughout the history of the divided kingdom. Under King Asa, a generation later, we read:

*"And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the*

*abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him." (2 Chronicles 15:8-9 KJV)*

The northern tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon *fell to him out of Israel in abundance*. Later, under King Hezekiah, messengers were sent throughout the entire north, as far as Zebulun, inviting the Israelites to come to Jerusalem for the Passover. Some mocked, but others humbled themselves and came.

*"So the posts (messengers) passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem." (2 Chronicles 30:10-11 KJV)*

Under Josiah, the reforms extended into Naphtali and Ephraim (2 Chronicles 34:6), indicating that members of those tribes were present in or closely connected to Judah by that time.

And centuries later, when the infant Jesus was brought to the temple, an elderly prophetess named Anna was there. Luke identifies her specifically as being *of the tribe of Asher* (Luke 2:36). Asher was a northern tribe. Yet here she was, in the temple in Jerusalem, having served God with fasting and prayer night and day. She was living evidence that descendants of the northern tribes had been absorbed into Judah and were still identifiable by their tribal heritage at the time of Christ.

This migration is of immense theological significance. It means that when the Scriptures speak of "Judah" or "the Jews" in the later

periods of biblical history, they are not speaking of only two tribes. The southern kingdom became the repository of a faithful remnant from all twelve tribes of Israel. Judah absorbed Israelites from every tribe who chose the covenant over idolatry. The twelve tribes were preserved in Judah, and it is in Judah that the covenant promises continued to be carried forward.

## **The House of Israel in Ezekiel**

This is confirmed by one of the most significant patterns in the prophetic literature. In the book of Ezekiel, God repeatedly addresses the exiles of Judah in Babylon using the term "house of Israel." Not house of Judah. House of Israel. The term that originally distinguished the northern kingdom from the southern is now applied to Judah.

When God commissions Ezekiel, He says:

*"And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day." (Ezekiel 2:3 KJV)*

Yet Ezekiel was himself from Judah, ministering among fellow Judean exiles in Babylon. In chapter 8, when God shows Ezekiel a vision of abominations committed in the temple in Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, He calls those committing them "the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 8:6). In chapter 14, when certain elders of the exile come to inquire of God, the text identifies them as elders who have taken idols into their hearts, and God addresses them as "the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 14:1-5). Again, in chapter 20, elders come to inquire of the Lord, and God says, "Speak unto the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 20:3), yet these are Judean exiles.

The distinction between "Israel" and "Judah" as separate kingdoms had effectively dissolved. By the time of Ezekiel, "house of Israel" had become the comprehensive term for the entire covenant people, because Judah was the whole house of Israel. The faithful remnant from every tribe was there. The temple was there. The priesthood was there. The scriptures were there. And now the name was there too.

This is why Ezekiel 37 is one of the most breathtaking passages in all of Scripture. It is the time of Israel's resurrection. God sets Ezekiel down in the midst of a valley full of dry bones, and they are *very dry*. The bones are long dead. These are not people who recently perished. They represent those who lived and died across the centuries of Israel's unfaithfulness, those who were scattered in exile, slaughtered in judgment, and buried under the weight of the covenant curses. They never saw God's faithfulness vindicated in their lifetime. They died in the mess.

And God asks Ezekiel a question that should stop every reader in their tracks: *Son of man, can these bones live?* Ezekiel's answer is the answer of faith: *O Lord GOD, thou knowest* (Ezekiel 37:3). He will not say it is impossible, because nothing (except lying) is impossible for the covenant-keeping God. And then God commands him to prophesy to the bones, and the bones come together, sinew and flesh cover them, and breath enters them, and they stand upon their feet: an exceeding great army.

Then God identifies them:

*"Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts."  
(Ezekiel 37:11 KJV)*

The *whole house of Israel*. Not a remnant. Not the faithful few. The whole house, including those who died in their rebellion, those

who were carried away by Assyria and never returned, those who perished under the covenant curses. Their own confession is despair: *Our hope is lost; we are cut off*. And God's response is resurrection. He will open their graves. He will bring them into the land of Israel. He will put His Spirit in them, and they will live.

This corresponds to the second resurrection described in Revelation 20. After the Millennium, after the first resurrection of the saints, there is a general resurrection, and among those who rise will be the countless Israelites who lived and died without ever seeing the promises fulfilled. They died under the curses. They died scattered among the nations. Many died in outright rebellion. But God is so faithful to His covenant that He will raise them from the dead to show them what they missed. This is their opportunity to see the faithfulness of God with their own eyes, to fully repent, and to accept the purpose for which God chose them in the first place.

It is in this context that God then takes the two sticks, one marked for Judah (the southern kingdom) and the children of Israel his companions (notice that Israel is included), and one for Ephraim (the northern kingdom) and all the house of Israel his companions, and joins them into one:

*"And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:"*  
(Ezekiel 37:22 KJV)

The two sticks become one. What was torn apart at Shechem under Rehoboam is finally, permanently restored. The northern tribes and the southern tribes are reunited under one King, who is Christ. Neither stick was destroyed beyond recovery. God preserved a faithful remnant from all twelve tribes in Judah, and He will raise the rest from the dead to complete the picture. This is how far the

covenant faithfulness of God extends. It's not just to the living, but to the dead. Not just to the obedient, but to those who died in their disobedience and never had the chance to see what God would ultimately accomplish. The descendants of Jacob have a pre-determined destiny, if they are willing to accept it. In him, all the promises are yes and amen, and that *all* reaches even into the grave.

## **The Formal Divorce**

But before the restoration, there had to be a reckoning. The northern kingdom did not merely drift into sin, it plunged headlong into apostasy and stayed there for over two centuries, from Jeroboam's rebellion around 930 BC to the Assyrian conquest in 722 BC. Not a single king of the northern kingdom is described as righteous. Every one of them walked in the sins of Jeroboam. God sent prophets (e.g., Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea) and the kingdom refused to repent.

So, God did what any righteous husband under Torah had the legal right to do. He issued a bill of divorce. Jeremiah records the action in language that draws directly on the marriage covenant:

*"And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also."  
(Jeremiah 3:8 KJV)*

The language is precise. God is the husband. Israel is the wife. She committed adultery, spiritual adultery, the worship of other gods, and God *put her away* and *gave her a bill of divorce*. This is not metaphor loosely applied. It is the legal language of Deuteronomy 24:1, which provides for divorce when a husband finds "some uncleanness" in his wife. God followed His own Torah.

He did not act outside the law. He acted within it, lawfully terminating the marital relationship with the northern kingdom.

The instrument of this divorce was Assyria. In 722 BC, Shalmaneser V and then Sargon II besieged Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, and deported the population. The Assyrian policy was calculated to destroy national identity: they scattered conquered peoples across the empire and resettled foreigners in the vacated lands. It was designed to make the divorced wife disappear.

And yet, even in this devastating passage, look at what God says next. He does not stop with the divorce. He pleads:

*"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:" (Jeremiah 3:14 KJV)*

This is astonishing. In the same chapter where God declares He has given Israel a bill of divorce, He says *I am married unto you*. The Hebrew word translated "married" is *ba'al*. It means I am your husband, I am your master, I own you. The divorce is real, and yet the bond is not ultimately severed in God's heart. He has put the northern kingdom away according to the law, but the covenant love persists. He still has a plan for reaching them.

How is it possible that God can both divorce Israel and remain married to her? This is the legal and theological tension that drives the entire narrative forward, and it will not find its resolution until we reach the crucifixion.

## **Exile Is Not Divorce**

It is essential to understand the distinction between what happened to the northern kingdom and what later happened to the southern kingdom. They are not the same. The northern kingdom was

divorced. The southern kingdom (although worse in her behaviour) was disciplined. Both suffered catastrophic defeat and deportation, but the legal standing of each was fundamentally different.

When Babylon conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC, it was devastating. The temple was destroyed. The city was burned. The people were carried away into captivity. The lament of the psalmist captures the horror: *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion* (Psalm 137:1). But nowhere in Scripture does God say He divorced Judah. He disciplined her. He sent her into exile. He subjected her to the curses of the covenant that Moses had foretold in Deuteronomy 28. But He did not put her away.

In fact, God is explicit about this. Through Isaiah, He challenges anyone to produce evidence of such a divorce:

*“Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.” (Isaiah 50:1 KJV)*

The rhetorical questions demand the answer: there is no bill of divorce for Judah. There is no creditor to whom she has been sold. Her suffering is the consequence of her own sin, but she remains in covenant. She is still the wife. The marriage stands.

This distinction is critical. The northern kingdom received a formal, legal divorce, which was enacted through the Assyrian conquest and deportation. The southern kingdom received the discipline of the covenant curses, which is carried out through their exile in Babylon, later subjugation by Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Islamic caliphates. But the marriage was never terminated. Judah's

suffering was the chastening of a wife who remained in the house, not the expulsion of one who had been sent away.

And because the faithful from all twelve tribes had migrated south before the northern kingdom fell, the continuation of Judah was the continuation of *all Israel*. The covenant promises to Abraham, the land, the nation, the seed, the blessing, were all preserved in Judah. Not in two tribes only, but in a remnant drawn from every tribe, held together by the covenant, the priesthood, the temple, and the Scriptures.

## **The Legal Problem**

Now we arrive at one of the most remarkable theological tensions in all of Scripture. God divorced the northern kingdom. He did so lawfully, according to His own Torah. And His Torah says this:

*"Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." (Deuteronomy 24:4 KJV)*

Under the Mosaic law, once a husband divorces his wife and she goes to another man, the first husband can never take her back. To do so would be an abomination. The law is absolute. There is no exception clause, no provision for restoration. And the northern kingdom did go to other gods. She went to the Baals, the Asherim, the golden calves. She was defiled. She became Gentile (a nation outside of the covenant).

So, God faces a legal impossibility of His own making. He is bound by His oath to Abraham that all twelve tribes would inherit the promises. He is equally bound by His own Torah that a divorced and defiled wife cannot be remarried to her former husband. The

Abrahamic covenant demands restoration. The Mosaic law forbids it. Both are the word of God. Both are inviolable.

How does God resolve this? How does He keep both His promise to Abraham and His law given through Moses? Paul gives us the answer:

*"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Romans 7:4 KJV)*

The death of one party dissolves a marriage covenant. A widow is free from the law of her husband. She may marry again without any violation of Torah. Christ, as the husband of Israel, died. His death dissolved the old marriage covenant, not just for Judah, but for all Israel, including the divorced northern kingdom. And when He rose from the dead, He rose as a *new* husband, legally free to enter into a *new* covenant with all twelve tribes, with no violation of Deuteronomy 24.

This is the staggering genius of Christ's crucifixion and the depth of God's commitment to His oath to Abraham. It is not merely an atonement for personal sins, though it is that. It is a legal mechanism by which the God of Israel can remarry His divorced wife without breaking His own law. The death of Christ dissolved the old covenant. The resurrection of Christ inaugurated the new covenant.

*"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make*

*with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jeremiah 31:31-33 KJV)*

And under this new covenant, the very thing that Deuteronomy 24 forbade becomes possible: the restoration of all twelve tribes to their God.

Hosea saw this. God told him to marry a prostitute, to love a woman beloved of her companion yet an adulteress, and then said:

*"And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." (Hosea 2:23 KJV)*

Lo-Ammi (not my people) would be called "my people" again. Lo-Ruhamah (not shown mercy) would receive mercy. The divorced wife would be restored. The scattered would be gathered. The dead marriage would be resurrected, just as the dead husband would be. And Paul quotes this very passage in Romans 9:25-26, applying it to the calling of both Jews and Gentiles into the new covenant, not as a replacement of the old promises, but as their fulfilment.

## **Judgment as Faithfulness**

The division of the kingdom, the divorce of the north, the exile of the south, the centuries of scattering under Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Islamic empires, all of it, every devastating chapter of Israel's suffering, was an expression of covenant faithfulness. Not its violation.

God did exactly what He said He would do. He warned them through Moses. He warned them through the prophets. He gave

them centuries to repent. And when they did not, He enacted the very curses that were written into the covenant from the beginning. The curses were not a surprise. They were a provision. They were built into the terms of the agreement at Sinai, and their fulfillment is proof that God's word is reliable. They're proof, not that He abandoned Israel, but that every word He speaks comes to pass and there is no such thing as abrogation when it comes to the true God and His word.

*"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11 KJV)*

If the blessings of the covenant were real, then the curses must be real too. We cannot have one without the other. A covenant whose penalties are never enforced is a covenant that means nothing. And a God who threatens punishment but never follows through is a God whose promises of blessing cannot be trusted either. True faithfulness runs in both directions.

This is what Jeremiah understood when he wept over Jerusalem. This is what Ezekiel understood when he lay on his side for 390 days (*Ezekiel 4.4-5*) to bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. This is what Daniel understood when he prayed from Babylon, confessing the sins of his people and pleading for the restoration that the same covenant guaranteed. They knew that the God who punished was the God who would restore. They held both truths in tension because both truths were spoken by the same mouth.

The divorce of the northern kingdom was not the end of the story. It was the setting up of a legal problem so profound that only God Himself could solve it, and He would solve it by dying. The bill of divorce was a wound. Christ's crucifixion was the surgery. And

the resurrection was the beginning of the healing that would, in God's time, bring all twelve tribes back into one nation, under one King, in the land that He swore to their fathers.

Beginning at Moses, we can see it. The law that divided is the law that drives us to Christ. The covenant that cursed is the covenant that compels God to save. And in him, all the promises, every one of them, without exception, are yes. And amen.

In the next chapter, we will examine the principle that Paul articulates so powerfully in Romans: that the faithlessness of Israel does not nullify the faithfulness of God, and that this truth is the very foundation upon which the gospel stands.

## Chapter 7

# Faithlessness Does Not Void Faithfulness

We have now traced the covenant from Abraham through Sinai and into the catastrophe of the divided kingdom. We have seen the northern tribes plunge into idolatry under Jeroboam, the faithful migrate south to Judah, God issue a formal bill of divorce to the north, and the southern kingdom endure exile as covenant discipline. At every stage, God acted lawfully, precisely, and in exact accordance with the terms He Himself established through Moses.

But after surveying all of this (the rebellion, the scattering, the divorce, the exile, the centuries of punishment under foreign empires), a question arises that we cannot avoid. It is, in fact, the most important question anyone can ask about the covenant. Paul asks it directly in his letter to the Romans, and he asks it in language that is startlingly blunt:

*"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" (Romans 3:3 KJV)*

This is the question that the entire Bible exists to answer. Does Israel's failure cancel God's promise? Does human faithlessness void divine faithfulness? Has the covenant collapsed under the

weight of Israel's sin? And Paul's answer is immediate, emphatic, and absolute:

*"God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." (Romans 3:4 KJV)*

*God forbid.* In the Greek, *mē genoito*. It means, let it never be, may it never come to pass, it is unthinkable.

This is how The Complete Jewish Bible translates the verse:

*"Heaven forbid! God would be true even if everyone were a liar! -- as the Tanakh says, "so that you, God, may be proved right in your words and win the verdict when you are put on trial."" (Romans 3:4 CJB)*

Paul uses the strongest negation available in the language. The faithlessness of Israel does not make the faithfulness of God without effect. It cannot. It is impossible. As I began to understand the Bible, I realized the Bible is a book about Israel. As I've grown in my understanding, I've come to realize that the Bible is, in fact, a book about God's faithfulness to Israel. God will be proved true even if every human being is proved a liar. And when God Himself stands before the court of human opinion, when men presume to judge whether He has kept His word, He will win the verdict. He will be vindicated. His faithfulness is not contingent on any human.

## **The Advantage of the Jew**

Paul arrives at this thundering declaration through a line of reasoning that begins earlier in Romans 3. He has just spent two chapters demonstrating that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin; that the Jew who possesses the law is no better off before God's judgment seat than the Gentile who does not, if the Jew fails to keep

the law. And then he anticipates the objection that naturally follows: if this is the case, what is the point of being a Jew at all?

*"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."  
(Romans 3:1-2 KJV)*

The advantage is *much every way*. Paul does not diminish it. He does not say that the covenant with Israel was a preliminary arrangement now superseded. He does not say that Jewish identity has become irrelevant in the age of the gospel. He says the advantage is great, and the chief advantage is this: *unto them were committed the oracles of God*. The Scriptures. The Torah. The prophets. The writings. The very words of God were entrusted to Israel, not to the world at large, not to humanity in general, but to a specific people as a sacred trust.

This matters because the oracles of God contain the promises of God. And if the promises were given to Israel, then they must be fulfilled in Israel. If they are redirected to another people or dissolved into a generic offer of salvation extended to the whole world without distinction, then the oracles themselves become unreliable. If God can replace the Jews with Christians, why wouldn't He replace Christians with Muslims and Muslims with Mormons? If God can revoke what He committed to Israel, then nothing He has said can be trusted, because the same God who spoke to Abraham is the God who speaks to us. His credibility is indivisible.

And so Paul asks: what if some of them did not believe? Does their unbelief cancel the promise? Does their failure to respond to the gospel annul the covenant? And his answer is not a nuanced, qualified, on-the-one-hand-but-on-the-other response. It is *mē genoito*. God forbid! The question itself is offensive to him. Of

course, the faithlessness of Israel does not void the faithfulness of God. To suggest otherwise is to make God a liar. And if God is a liar, then we have no gospel, no salvation, and no hope.

## **Has God Cast Away His People?**

Paul returns to this theme with even greater force in Romans 11. By this point in the letter, he has laid out the mystery of Israel's hardening, a subject we will examine in detail in the next chapter, and he confronts the question that every reader must face:

*"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." (Romans 11:1 KJV)*

Again, *mē genoito*. Has God cast away His people? God forbid. And Paul's proof is himself. If God had cast away Israel, then Paul should not exist as a believer. He is an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. His very conversion is evidence that God has not abandoned the covenant. If even one Israelite is being called by God, then the covenant is operative. The promise is alive.

He then reaches back to Elijah, who stood alone on Mount Carmel and afterwards fled to Horeb, believing he was the last faithful man in Israel. God's response was to inform him that He had reserved seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Paul draws the parallel:

*"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." (Romans 11:5 KJV)*

There is always a remnant. In the darkest periods of Israel's history, under the apostasy of Ahab, during the Babylonian exile, under the oppression of the Greek and Roman empires, God preserved a remnant. The remnant is not an accident. It is not a

residual. It is *according to the election of grace*: chosen, preserved, set apart by God's sovereign decision. The remnant is proof that the covenant has not been voided. It is the living thread that connects the promise to Abraham with its ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

## **The Olive Tree**

It is here in Romans 11 that Paul introduces one of the most important images in all of his writing: the olive tree. And it is here that he delivers what may be the most direct warning against replacement theology anywhere in Scripture.

The olive tree represents the covenant community: Israel, rooted in the patriarchs, nourished by the promises, cultivated by God across centuries of history. Some of the natural branches, Israelites who refused to believe, were broken off. And branches from a wild olive tree, Gentile believers, were grafted in among them, to share in the root and the fatness of the tree.

Paul then turns directly to the Gentile believers and says:

*"Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." (Romans 11:18 KJV)*

Do not boast against the broken-off branches. As Gentiles, we did not create this tree. We did not plant it. We did not water it for two thousand years. We were grafted into something that already existed. We brought nothing of spiritual value. The root bears us, we do not bear the root. Our faith is nourished by the Abrahamic covenant, by the Torah, by the prophets, by the entire history of God's dealings with Israel. If we remove that root, we have nothing. We are a wild branch dangling in the air.

And then the warning sharpens:

*"For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." (Romans 11:21-22 KJV)*

This is a passage that should humble every Gentile believer who has ever entertained the thought that the church has replaced Israel. God broke off natural branches, His own covenant people, because of unbelief. If He did that to them, why would He not do it to us? Paul says we stand by faith. Not by ethnic heritage, not by denominational membership, not by religious tradition, but by *faith*. And if we abandon that faith, if we fall into the same conceit that led Israel into apostasy, the conceit that our position is secure regardless of our lack of faithfulness, then we too will be cut off.

And here is the point that demolishes replacement theology once and for all:

*"And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again."  
(Romans 11:23 KJV)*

The broken-off branches can be grafted back in. God is *able* to do it. Paul does not say that God has finished with Israel and moved on to the Gentiles permanently. He says the natural branches can be restored and not merely that God is able, but that He will:

*"For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"  
(Romans 11:24 KJV)*

*How much more.* If God can do the unnatural thing (grafting wild Gentile branches into a cultivated Jewish tree) how much more readily will He restore the natural branches to their own tree? It is

easier, not harder. It is more natural, not less. The regrafting of Israel is the more expected outcome, not the surprising one. The surprising thing was that Gentiles were included at all.

## **The Mystery and the Doxology**

Paul then reveals what he calls a mystery; something hidden in the counsels of God that is now being disclosed:

*"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:"*  
(Romans 11:25-26 KJV)

The mystery is this: Israel's blindness is partial and temporary. It is *in part*, not total. And it is "until", not permanent. There is a limit to it, and the limit is the fulness of the Gentiles. When the full number of Gentiles who are to be grafted in has come in, then the blindness will be lifted. And *all Israel shall be saved*. This limit of Israel's blindness "until" aligns with Isaiah's prophecy.

*"And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land." (Isaiah 6:9-12 KJV)*

God says His covenant people will be blind until a final calamity falls on them. At that time, their eyes and ears will be open. Christ, Himself, prophesied that they would only wake up when the final calamity is upon them. It is when there is no help but the Lord that they will finally repent and acknowledge their Saviour and bless His name.

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."*  
(Matthew 23:37-39 KJV)

That's when all Israel will be saved. All Israel. Not some. Not a remnant only. Not the ones who happen to convert during the church age. *All Israel shall be saved.* Paul quotes Isaiah 59:20 to anchor this promise in the prophetic tradition: the Deliverer will come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. This is not a new idea that Paul invented. It is the culmination of what the prophets had been declaring for centuries. God will save His people. He will turn their hearts. He will fulfil every promise.

And then Paul tells us why. He gives us the theological ground on which this entire hope rests:

*"As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."* (Romans 11:28-29 KJV)

There are two realities operating simultaneously, and both must be held together. First: as concerning the gospel, Israel is currently in a state of enmity. They are opposed to the message of Christ. They

are, in Paul's time and in ours, largely hostile to the gospel. That is the reality on the ground. But second: as touching the election, they are *beloved*. Not were beloved. Not used to be beloved. They *are* beloved: present tense, ongoing, active. And the reason is *for the fathers' sakes*. It's because of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because of the covenantal oath that God swore to the patriarchs.

And then the sentence that seals it forever: *the gifts and calling of God are without repentance*. God does not change His mind. He does not revoke His gifts. He does not withdraw His calling. The word translated "without repentance" is *ametamelēta*. It means irrevocable, not subject to change, beyond the possibility of reversal. What God gave to Israel, He gave permanently. It is beyond the possibility of reversal. What He called Israel to, He called her to permanently. No amount of rebellion, no depth of apostasy, no duration of blindness can cause God to repent of His election.

This is the rock on which the entire gospel stands. If God's gifts and calling can be revoked, then no promise is safe. If He changed His mind about Israel, He can change His mind about you and me. If He abandoned the covenant with Abraham, He can abandon the new covenant too. But He cannot. It is impossible. His word is irrevocable. His oath is unbreakable. And because He swore to Abraham, every promise downstream of that oath (the land, the nation, the seed, the blessing, the priesthood, the kingdom) is secured forever.

This is why Paul erupts into a doxology at the end of Romans 11. After wrestling with the mystery of Israel's hardening, after warning the Gentiles not to boast, after declaring that all Israel will be saved and that God's gifts are irrevocable, he can barely contain himself:

*"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments,*

*and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."*  
(Romans 11:33-36 KJV)

The depth of the riches. The unsearchable judgments. His ways past finding out. Paul is overwhelmed, not by the complexity of theology, but by the faithfulness of God. The same God who divorced the northern kingdom and exiled the south has engineered a plan so magnificent that it resolves every legal tension, fulfils every promise, saves His people, and vindicates His own righteousness, all without violating a single word of Torah. And He did it by dying and rising again.

This is the mystery that Paul writes about to the Ephesians. The mystery was not a puzzle to be solved, but a secret long hidden in God that is now being revealed. He calls it "the mystery of the ages". It was *the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit* (Ephesians 3:4-5). And what is the content of this mystery? *That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel* (Ephesians 3:6). The mystery is the fellowship, i.e., that Gentiles who were strangers to the covenants of promise, without God and without hope in the world, would be brought into the same body with Israel through the gospel. Not to replace Israel, but to be joined to her. Not to inherit a different promise, but to partake of the same promise in Christ.

And then Paul says something staggering about the purpose of this mystery. It is not merely for human benefit. The church has been given a cosmic assignment:

*"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:" (Ephesians 3:10-11 KJV)*

The church (this fellowship of Jew and Gentile in one body) is God's demonstration project. Through it, the manifold wisdom of God is being made known to principalities and powers in heavenly places. Angels are watching. Spiritual authorities are learning something about the character of God that they could not have known any other way. The plan that divorced the north, exiled the south, scattered the tribes among the nations, hardened Israel in part, opened a door to the Gentiles, grafted wild branches into a cultivated tree, and is now engineering the restoration of the natural branches; this plan, in all its layered complexity, is a display of wisdom so profound that even the angelic realm is being educated by it. No human mind could have conceived such a plan. It comes from God alone, it is accomplished through God alone, and its ultimate purpose is the glory of God alone. It is to be declared not only on earth, but before the hosts of heaven.

### **The Same Promise, the Same Gospel, the Same Risk**

The writer of Hebrews takes the same principle (the inviolability of God's promise despite human failure) and applies it with surgical precision to the church. In Hebrews 3 and 4, he draws a direct line from the wilderness generation to the first-century believers, and the argument is devastating in its simplicity: it is the same promise, the same gospel, the same land, the same rest, and the same risk of unbelief. The only things that change are the time and the people.

He begins by quoting Psalm 95, where the Holy Spirit says through David: *Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your*

*hearts, as in the provocation* (Hebrews 3:7-8). The provocation was the wilderness. God was provoked by the generation that saw miracle after miracle and still refused to believe that God would give them the land He had promised. And God swore in His wrath: *They shall not enter into my rest* (Hebrews 3:11).

Then the writer turns to his audience and says: *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God* (Hebrews 3:12). The same risk. The same evil heart. The same unbelief. And he defines the unbelief precisely: it is not believing God's word. God's word says something plainly, and we refuse to accept it. That is what the wilderness generation did. God promised them the land, and they did not believe Him. Caleb and Joshua believed, and they entered. The rest perished in the wilderness.

In Hebrews 4, the argument intensifies. The writer says that the promise of rest, *katapausis*, a ceasing from labour, a divine repose, was first established at creation, when God Himself rested on the seventh day. It was offered to Israel in the promised land. They failed to enter because of unbelief. It was offered again in David's time, four hundred years later: *Today, if ye will hear his voice*. And it is offered now to the church. The promise has never been withdrawn. It has been carried forward through the centuries, surviving every failure, every rebellion, every generation that refused to believe.

*"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (Hebrews 4:11 KJV)*

*The same example of unbelief.* The same pattern. The same risk. The writer is telling the church: you are not immune. The promise that was preached to ancient Israel is the same promise that has been preached to us. And if they fell short of it because they did not

believe God's word, so can we. This is not a different gospel for a different people. It is the same gospel, entrusted now to those who have the Holy Spirit, who should understand it at a far deeper level than ancient Israel ever could. And yet the warning stands: do not harden your hearts. Do not allow an evil heart of unbelief to creep into your theology. Do not dismiss God's word because it does not align with your inherited assumptions.

And what is the specific unbelief the writer fears? It is the same unbelief that Paul confronts in Romans: the refusal to believe that God's promises to Israel are still operative. The refusal to believe that the land is still promised, that the covenant is still binding, that the rest still remains for the people of God. If we teach that God has moved on from Israel, that the promises have been spiritualized away, that the land is no longer relevant, that the covenant has been transferred to the church, this is unbelief. It is calling God a liar. It is doing exactly what the wilderness generation did: dismissing His word because we prefer our own conclusions.

## **The Cosmic Guarantee**

If Paul's argument from Romans and the writer's argument from Hebrews were not sufficient, God Himself provides a guarantee so extravagant that it should silence every doubt. He ties the permanence of His covenant with Israel to the permanence of the created order itself:

*"Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." (Jeremiah 31:35-36 KJV)*

The sun. The moon. The stars. The tides. These are the guarantors of the covenant. If you can stop the sun from rising, then, and only then, will Israel cease to be a nation before God. If you can shut down the ordinances of the heavens, then you can argue that God has finished with Israel. But not until then.

And then, as if to remove any remaining ambiguity:

*"Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD." (Jeremiah 31:37 KJV)*

If you can measure the expanding universe, if you can plumb the foundations of the earth and exhaustively catalogue every dimension of the cosmos, then God will cast off Israel. Otherwise, He will not. Not for all that they have done. Not for the golden calves, not for the Baal worship, not for the rejection and killing of the prophets, not for the crucifixion of Christ. *For all that they have done*, He will not cast them off. This is the faithfulness of God expressed in language so absolute that it admits no qualification, no exception, and no expiry date.

In him, all the promises of God are yes. And amen. Not the convenient promises. Not the ones that fit our theology. Not the ones we have selected for the church while discarding the ones that belong to Israel. All the promises. Every oath to Abraham, every term of the covenant at Sinai, every prophetic declaration of restoration, every vision of the regathered twelve tribes in the promised land, all of them, in Christ, are yes and amen, unto the glory of God (2 Corinthians 1:20).

## **The Warning to the Church**

But Paul's argument in Romans 11 is not merely a celebration. It is also a warning. And the warning is aimed squarely at Gentile believers who might conclude from Israel's stumbling that God has transferred His covenant affections to the church.

He says it plainly: *be not highminded, but fear* (Romans 11:20). Do not become conceited. Do not develop a theology that writes Israel out of her own story. Do not take the blessings of the covenant and claim them for yourself while leaving the curses for the Jews. This is precisely the error that replacement theology commits, and Paul identifies it as the very same sin that brought judgment on Israel in the first place. Pride.

Remember what Ezekiel 16 showed us: the root idol of Israel was pride. She trusted in her own beauty. She took the gifts God had given her and began to believe she deserved them, that they were hers by right rather than by grace. And now Paul warns the Gentile church: you are in danger of the same sin. You have been grafted into a tree you did not plant. You are partaking of a richness you did not earn. And if you begin to believe that this position is yours by right, that you have replaced Israel, that the church is now the permanent possessor of the covenant promises, then you have fallen into the identical pride that brought judgment on the natural branches.

The church does not replace Israel. The church is grafted into Israel. The wild branches are supported by the root, not the other way around. And the root is the Abrahamic covenant, the patriarchs, the promises, the Torah, the prophets, the entire Hebrew Bible. Remove that root, and the church collapses. Sever that connection, and the Gentile believer has no foundation to stand on.

This is why replacement theology is not simply a theological error. It is, in Paul's framework, an expression of the very pride that God judges. It is the Gentile church boasting against the broken-off branches and doing exactly what Paul said not to do. And the consequence Paul warns of is severe: *take heed lest he also spare not thee*. If God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare the wild ones who repeat their sin.

## **The Character of God on Trial**

We began this book by placing the character of God on trial. The question was whether God is faithful to His word. Every chapter since has been building the case. The covenant with Abraham, the terms at Sinai, the curses that were fulfilled to the letter, the divorce that followed Torah, the legal problem that only Christ's crucifixion could resolve all demonstrate God's faithful character. And now, in Romans 3 and Romans 11, we arrive at the apostolic verdict.

The verdict is this: God is faithful. Unwaveringly, irrevocably, relentlessly faithful. Israel's failure did not catch Him off guard. Their rebellion did not derail His plan. Their blindness did not frustrate His purpose. He incorporated every failure, every judgment, every exile, and every scattering into a plan so vast and so intricate that it accomplishes what no human arrangement ever could. It accomplishes the salvation of Israel, the inclusion of the Gentiles, the vindication of His righteousness, and the demonstration of His mercy, all at the same time, all through the same mechanism: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Beginning at Moses, we can trace the line. The covenant at Sinai established the terms. The curses of Deuteronomy enforced them. The divorce of the northern kingdom followed the law of Deuteronomy 24. The exile of Judah fulfilled the warnings of Leviticus 26. And the irrevocability of the promise sworn to

Abraham, secured by oath, guaranteed by the ordinances of heaven demands that restoration must come. The law that judged is the law that compels God to save. The covenant that cursed is the covenant that cannot be voided. And at every point along this line, the faithfulness of God is not diminished by the faithlessness of man. It is amplified by it. The darker the rebellion, the brighter the mercy. The deeper the failure, the more astonishing the restoration.

Let God be true, Paul says, and every man a liar. If the entire world lines up to accuse God of breaking His promises, if every theologian, every denomination, every philosophical tradition argues that God has moved on from Israel, then let them all be liars, and let God be true. His word will stand. His oath will hold. His covenant will endure. In him, all the promises are yes. And amen.

We have now completed our examination of the covenant at Sinai and the reality of rebellion. We have seen the terms of the Mosaic covenant, the consequences of breaking it, the divorce of the northern kingdom, and the apostolic declaration that none of this nullifies the faithfulness of God. In Part III, we will turn to the scattering of Israel and the times of the Gentiles, the mystery of Israel's hardening, the transition of the gospel to the nations, and the process by which wild branches are grafted into the olive tree of God's covenant people. The story is about to take what appears to be a detour, but as we will see, even the detour was planned from the beginning.

P A R T I I I

*The Scattering and the Times of the Gentiles*

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*Chapter 8*

## **The Mystery of Israel's Hardening**

In the previous chapter, we established that the faithlessness of Israel does not void the faithfulness of God. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. The covenant stands. All the promises, in Christ, are yes and amen. But this raises a question that we cannot avoid: if the covenant still stands, and if God has never abandoned His people, then why are they blind? Why did the Sanhedrin, the most learned men in Israel, fail to recognise their own Messiah when He stood before them in the flesh? Why did the nation that possessed the oracles of God, the temple, the priesthood, and the promises reject the very fulfilment of everything they had been given?

The answer is as disturbing as it is profound. Israel's blindness is not an accident. It is not the unfortunate result of stubbornness left unchecked. It is a judicial act of God. He imposed it. He ordained it. And He did so for reasons that reach far beyond Israel's own story, into a plan so vast that Paul calls it a *mystery* (Romans 11:25).

This chapter will trace the mystery of Israel's hardening from its origin in the Torah, through the prophets, into the ministry of Christ, and into the apostolic writings. We will see that the hardening was announced in advance, that it serves a specific divine purpose, that it opened a door to the Gentile world, and that it is temporary. It has a beginning and it has an end. And when it ends, all Israel shall be saved.

## **The Commission of Isaiah**

The clearest Old Testament statement of Israel's judicial hardening comes in Isaiah 6, the passage where Isaiah receives his prophetic commission. It is one of the most solemn scenes in all of Scripture. Isaiah sees the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. The seraphim cry out, *Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory* (Isaiah 6:3). Isaiah is undone. He knows he is a man of unclean lips, dwelling among a people of unclean lips. A seraph touches his mouth with a live coal from the altar and declares his iniquity purged. Then God speaks: *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* And Isaiah answers: *Here am I; send me* (Isaiah 6:8).

And then God gives him the most devastating commission any prophet ever received:

*"And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." (Isaiah 6:9-10 KJV)*

Read it carefully. God is not merely predicting that the people will refuse to listen. He is commanding Isaiah to *make* their hearts fat. *Make* their ears heavy. *Shut* their eyes. This is an active, divine operation. God is deliberately imposing a condition of spiritual insensibility upon His own people. They will hear the words of the prophet, but they will not understand. They will see the signs, but they will not perceive. Their hearts will grow thick, their ears dull, their eyes closed. And the purpose clause is staggering: *lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.*

In other words, the hardening is designed to prevent premature repentance. God does not want them to convert at this point. He does not want them healed yet. There is a purpose being served by their blindness, and that purpose must run its full course before the healing can come.

Isaiah's next question is the natural one: *Lord, how long? How long will this condition last? And the answer is chilling:*

*"Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land." (Isaiah 6:11-12 KJV)*

Until the land is desolate. Until the people are removed far away. Until there is a great forsaking. This is not a brief period of spiritual dullness. This is a condition that will persist through the destruction of the nation, through the exile, through centuries of scattering. The blindness will outlast kingdoms.

And then comes verse 13, one of the most theologically dense verses in all of Isaiah:

*"But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." (Isaiah 6:13 KJV)*

The structure of this verse describes a process of repeated reduction. Even if a tenth survives the initial devastation, that remnant will face further purging. It shall return, and it shall be eaten. The emphasis is not on the preservation of a majority. It is on a relentless narrowing, a stripping away, until only the essential core remains. God is not merely punishing; He is refining. He is burning off everything that is not holy until the only thing left is the holy seed.

The tree image reinforces this. The terebinth and the oak, when felled, leave behind a stump. The visible tree is gone. The canopy, the branches, the leaves, all of it is cut away. But the root system remains alive beneath the surface. The covenant structure is reduced, not annihilated. What appears to be total destruction is, in fact, a severe pruning that preserves the life hidden in the root.

And the theological centre of the verse is the final phrase: *the holy seed shall be the substance thereof*. The holy seed is not the whole nation numerically. It is the surviving covenant core, the remnant set apart for God's purpose. The word *substance* here refers to what stands firm, what endures, what remains when everything else has been consumed. The holy seed is the irreducible minimum of the covenant. It is the life that cannot be destroyed because it is rooted in the promise of God.

In covenant lawsuit terms, Isaiah 6:13 declares that even when the verdict results in total devastation, the covenant root is not uprooted. The visible structure may fall. The cities may be emptied. The houses may stand vacant. The land may lie desolate. But the promise embedded in the root survives. And this is precisely what sets up the messianic imagery in Isaiah 11, where a *shoot* comes forth from the *stump of Jesse* (Isaiah 11:1). The stump of chapter 6 anticipates the restoration of chapter 11. The tree that was cut down will sprout again. The holy seed will produce a branch. And that branch is Christ.

## **Christ Confirms the Hardening**

When Christ came to Israel, He did not arrive into a nation that was spiritually receptive and then made a free choice to reject Him. He arrived into a nation upon which a judicial hardening had already been imposed, centuries earlier, through Isaiah. And Christ Himself confirmed that this hardening was operative in His own ministry.

When the disciples asked Him why He taught in parables, His answer was not what we might expect:

*"He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." (Matthew 13:11-13 KJV)*

Christ taught in parables not to make the truth accessible to everyone, but to conceal it from those who had been judicially hardened while revealing it to the chosen few. He then quotes Isaiah 6 directly:

*"And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Matthew 13:14-15 KJV)*

The Sanhedrin were brilliant men. They were the best scholars, the most rigorous students of the Torah, the most disciplined minds in Judah. And yet they could not understand Christ. Nicodemus came to Him by night and said, *Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him* (John 3:2). They knew. They could see the evidence. They acknowledged privately that He was from God. And yet they could not process what He was teaching. They could not receive His witness. Their hearts were fat. Their ears were heavy. Their eyes were shut. Not because they were stupid, but

because God had imposed this condition upon them, and it had been in effect since the days of Isaiah.

This is why Christ said to Nicodemus, *Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?* (John 3:10). How can you be a teacher, and you don't know these things? Because the curse prevents it. The hardening is judicial. It does not discriminate based on intelligence or sincerity. It operates on the national level, by divine decree, and only the remnant chosen by grace is exempted from it.

## **John's Testimony**

The apostle John provides what may be the most poignant commentary on Israel's hardening. After recording the many signs and miracles that Christ performed publicly, John writes:

*"But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (John 12:37-38 KJV)*

They did not believe, *that* the prophecy of Isaiah might be fulfilled. The word *that* is critical. It introduces purpose, not merely result. Their unbelief was not a failure of the mission. It was the fulfilment of it. Isaiah had prophesied that the report would not be believed, that the arm of the Lord would not be recognised. And this is exactly what happened. The mission was on schedule.

And then John adds:

*"Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor*

*understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." (John 12:39-40 KJV)*

*They could not believe.* Not they would not. They *could not*. The distinction matters enormously. If they simply would not believe, then the failure is entirely theirs and the story ends with their stubbornness. But if they *could not* believe, then something larger is at work. God had blinded their eyes. God had hardened their hearts. And He had done so *that* they should not be converted and healed. The healing is coming; it is certain, guaranteed by covenant. But it is not coming yet. The blindness must serve its purpose first.

## **The Purpose of the Hardening**

Why would God do this to His own people? Why would He impose blindness on the very nation He chose, the nation He adorned as His bride, the nation to whom He committed His oracles and His promises? The answer unfolds across several layers of Scripture, and each layer reveals a different dimension of the divine purpose.

The first layer is judgment. Israel's hardening is, at one level, a consequence of their long history of rebellion. The northern kingdom worshipped golden calves for two centuries. The southern kingdom, despite having the temple and the priesthood, filled the land with idols and shed innocent blood. God sent prophet after prophet, and they killed them. Stephen's indictment before the Sanhedrin captures this history with devastating clarity: *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers* (Acts 7:52). The hardening is, in part, the covenant curse made manifest. They refused to hear, and so God ensured that they could not hear. The very faculty they abused was the faculty He took away.

The second layer is preservation. This may seem paradoxical, but the hardening actually protected Israel from a worse fate. If Israel had accepted Christ in the first century, they would have been fully accountable for the new covenant at a time when they were utterly unprepared to keep it. Their hearts had not been circumcised. Their pride had not been broken. The beast powers had not yet run their course. By hardening them, God preserved them in a state of suspended accountability, holding them in covenant (because the covenant is irrevocable) while preventing them from entering into the new covenant prematurely, before the conditions for their genuine, heart level repentance had been established.

Moses foresaw this sequence from the very beginning. In Deuteronomy 30, he describes an exact order of events that cannot be rearranged: first the blessings, then the curses, then the scattering among the nations, then the return to the LORD with all the heart, and only then the circumcision of the heart:

*"And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the*

*heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."  
(Deuteronomy 30:1-6 KJV)*

The heart circumcision comes at the end of the process, not at the beginning. It follows the full weight of the covenant curses. It follows the scattering. It follows the repentance that the scattering produces. Moses is telling us that there is a divinely ordered sequence to Israel's restoration, and no step can be skipped. The hardening is part of that sequence. It holds Israel in place, under the curses, until the appointed time when God Himself will circumcise their hearts and bring them into the new covenant that Jeremiah describes (Jeremiah 31:31-33). Beginning at Moses, we can see that even the blindness was planned, and even the blindness has an end written into the Torah.

The third layer is the one that concerns us most directly in this chapter: the hardening opened a door to the Gentiles.

## **The Door Opened to the Nations**

Paul explains the relationship between Israel's hardening and the Gentile inclusion with remarkable precision in Romans 11. He begins by asking whether Israel has stumbled so as to fall permanently, and his answer is the familiar *mē genoito*:

*"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy." (Romans 11:11 KJV)*

Israel's stumbling was not the end. It was the means by which salvation came to the Gentiles. Their fall opened a door. Because Israel, as a nation, was temporarily set aside from the active administration of God's purposes on the earth, the gospel went out

to the nations. The apostles turned to the Gentiles not because God had abandoned Israel, but precisely because Israel's hardening was part of the plan that would ultimately restore Israel.

And the purpose of the Gentile inclusion is itself aimed back at Israel: *to provoke them to jealousy*. God intends for Israel to see the Gentiles experiencing the blessings of the covenant (the Holy Spirit, the knowledge of Torah, the fellowship of faith, the covenant love of Jehovah) and to become jealous. The jealousy is not petty envy; it is the awakening of desire. When Israel sees what the Gentiles have received through her Messiah, she is meant to say: that belongs to us. Those are our promises. That is our God. And in saying so, she begins the journey back.

Paul then makes a statement that should stagger every reader:

*"Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?" (Romans 11:12 KJV)*

If Israel's *failure* produced such riches for the Gentile world (the spread of the gospel, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the establishment of the church among all nations), then what will Israel's *restoration* produce? How much more will come when the natural branches are grafted back in? Paul is saying that everything the Gentile world has experienced so far is merely the byproduct of Israel's stumble. The main event has not yet occurred. When Israel is restored, the result will be *life from the dead* (Romans 11:15). The resurrection of the covenant people will transform the entire earth.

## **Enemies and Beloved**

This produces what appears to be a contradiction, but it is not a contradiction at all. It is a paradox that only makes sense within the framework of covenant theology. Paul states both truths side by side:

*"As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." (Romans 11:28 KJV)*

Two realities, simultaneously true. Israel is, at the present time, hostile to the gospel. They are enemies of the message of Christ. They oppose it, resist it, and persecute those who preach it. That is the reality as it touches the gospel.

But as touching the election (the choice God made, the oath He swore, the covenant He established), they are *beloved*. Present tense. Active. Ongoing. Not formerly beloved. Not beloved in principle but abandoned in practice. Beloved *now*, even in their enmity, even in their blindness, even in their hostility. And the reason is *for the fathers' sakes*: because of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Because of the oath. Because of the covenant. Because God swore, and God does not lie.

This is what makes the situation of the Jewish people so unusual in the history of the world. They are simultaneously under judgment and under protection. They are blind, yet beloved. They are scattered, yet preserved. They are enemies of the gospel, yet the apple of God's eye. Every empire that has attempted to destroy them has itself been destroyed: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Ottoman. The Jewish people remain. And the reason is not their own resilience or ingenuity. The reason is the covenant. God is preserving them because He has a purpose for them that has not yet been fulfilled, and no power on earth or in the heavenly realm can thwart that purpose.

## **The Duration of the Blindness**

The most important thing to understand about Israel's hardening is that it is temporary. It has a defined endpoint. Paul states it plainly:

*"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." (Romans 11:25 KJV)*

Two qualifications limit the hardening. First, it is *in part*. Not every Israelite is blinded. There is always a remnant, chosen by grace, who can see and believe. Paul himself is proof of this. So were the twelve apostles. So were the thousands of Jews who believed in the first century. The hardening is national in scope but not universal in application. Second, it is *until*. There is an end. The blindness will last until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in. When the full number of Gentiles whom God intends to graft into the olive tree has been gathered, the hardening will be lifted.

And when the hardening is lifted, what follows?

*"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." (Romans 11:26-27 KJV)*

All Israel shall be saved. The Deliverer will come out of Zion. He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. He will take away their sins. And Paul anchors this promise in the covenant: *for this is my covenant unto them*. This is not a new promise. This is the same covenant, made with the same people, carrying the same terms, now brought to its ultimate fulfilment. The sins that accumulated across centuries of rebellion, the curse that fell upon generation after generation, the blindness that was imposed by divine decree,

all of it will be resolved when the Deliverer comes. And He will come, because the covenant demands it.

## **The Hardening in the Torah**

We should not be surprised by any of this, because the pattern was established from the very beginning. The Torah itself contains the prototype of judicial hardening: the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

Before Moses ever confronted Pharaoh, God told him what would happen: *I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go* (Exodus 4:21). And throughout the plague narrative, the text alternates between Pharaoh hardening his own heart and God hardening it for him. The hardening served a purpose. It was not arbitrary cruelty. God explains the purpose Himself:

*"And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." (Exodus 9:16 KJV)*

Pharaoh was raised up, and Pharaoh was hardened, so that God's power could be displayed and His name declared throughout all the earth. The hardening of Pharaoh was a mechanism for the revelation of God's glory. And Paul quotes this very verse in Romans 9:17 to explain God's dealings with Israel. The principle is the same. God hardens whom He wills, and He does so for the purpose of displaying His power and declaring His name.

Moses also foresaw the hardening of Israel itself. In Deuteronomy 29, after reciting all the signs and wonders of the Exodus, he says:

*"Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day."  
(Deuteronomy 29:4 KJV)*

Forty years of miracles. The parting of the sea. Manna from heaven. Water from the rock. The pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. And at the end of it all, Moses says: *The LORD has not given you a heart to perceive*. They saw everything and understood nothing. The capacity to perceive was withheld by God. And this same withholding continued through the centuries, through the judges, through the kings, through the prophets, and into the time of Christ. It was the same condition, imposed by the same God, for the same ultimate purpose: the display of His faithfulness and the fulfilment of His covenant.

## **The Danger of Misreading the Hardening**

The history of Christianity is, in significant measure, a history of misreading Israel's hardening. The church saw Jewish blindness and concluded that God had rejected the Jews. Theologians saw Jewish unbelief and developed replacement theology. Entire denominations were built on the assumption that because Israel did not accept Christ, God had moved on to the church permanently. The Jewish people were labelled *Christ-killers*. Persecution followed theology, and theology justified persecution. The pogroms, the expulsions, the ghettos, the forced conversions, and ultimately the Holocaust all grew, at least in part, from the theological soil of replacement theology.

But Paul anticipated exactly this error. He saw it coming. And he warned against it in the strongest possible terms. When he tells the Gentile believers not to be *wise in your own conceits* (Romans 11:25), he is specifically warning against the conceit that says: God is finished with Israel; we are the new Israel; the promises now belong to us. This conceit is precisely what Paul warns against when he reveals the mystery. The mystery itself is Israel's blindness and its purpose: the inclusion of the Gentiles. And Paul says the church

must not be ignorant of it, *lest ye should be wise in your own conceits* (Romans 11:25). The blindness is partial. The blindness is temporary. And the purpose of the blindness is the inclusion of the Gentiles, not the exclusion of Israel.

Every time the church has persecuted the Jewish people on theological grounds, it has demonstrated that it did not understand the mystery. Every time a theologian has argued that the church has replaced Israel, he has fallen into the exact conceit Paul warned against. And every time a believer has looked at the suffering of the Jewish people and concluded that God has abandoned them, he has called God a liar. Because God said the opposite. He said they are beloved. He said His gifts are irrevocable. He said all Israel shall be saved. To deny this is to embrace an evil heart of unbelief.

## **The Hardening and the First Fruits**

There is one more dimension to the mystery that must not be overlooked. The hardening of Israel is not merely a pause in God's plan. It is the period during which He is calling out the first fruits.

The spring holy days, as we examined in Chapter 5, picture the calling and preparation of the first fruits harvest. These are the ones chosen from among both Jew and Gentile during the present age. They receive the Holy Spirit. They understand the gospel. They have been exempted from the national hardening (if they are Jews) or grafted into the covenant community (if they are Gentiles). And their purpose is not merely personal salvation. Their purpose is to serve as teachers, priests, and administrators in the coming kingdom, when the full harvest of Israel is brought in.

The fall holy days picture the main harvest. Trumpets pictures the return of Christ and the salvation of His people. The Day of Atonement pictures the reconciliation of God with the whole house

of Israel. The Feast of Tabernacles pictures the ingathering of the nations. And the Last Great Day pictures the resurrection and final judgment that extends the opportunity even to those who lived and died during the millennia of blindness.

The hardening, then, is the period between the spring harvest and the fall harvest. It is the summer, the long growing season, during which the first fruits are ripening while the main crop is not yet ready. And when the season turns, when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in and the blindness is lifted, the fall harvest will begin. The Deliverer will come out of Zion. Ungodliness will be turned away from Jacob. The covenant will be fulfilled. And what was torn apart by sin and judgment will be made whole by the faithfulness of God.

The hardening, then, was already in effect long before the spring harvest. It was operative when Isaiah received his commission. It was operative when Christ walked among the Sanhedrin. And it was operative at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out and the first fruits began to be gathered. Christ is the wave sheaf, the first of the first fruits (1 Corinthians 15:20), offered during Unleavened Bread. And those called by the Spirit are *a kind of first fruits of his creatures* (James 1:18), exempted from the national blindness by the election of grace, called out while the hardening continues all around them.

The long summer between Pentecost and Trumpets is the period we now inhabit. And this is where the danger shifts. It is no longer Israel's pride that is being tested; it is the pride of the Gentiles. This is the season in which the wild branches, having been grafted in, risk developing the very conceit that Paul warns against: *be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee* (Romans 11:20-21). The summer is the proving ground for the Gentile church. And if

the church fails the test, if it boasts against the broken off branches and claims for itself what belongs to Israel, then it too will be cut off, and the natural branches will be regrafted into their own olive tree.

When the season turns, when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in and the blindness is lifted, the fall harvest will begin. The Deliverer will come out of Zion. Ungodliness will be turned away from Jacob. The covenant will be fulfilled. And what was torn apart by sin and judgment will be made whole by the faithfulness of God.

### **A Mystery, Not a Mistake**

Paul calls Israel's hardening a mystery. He does not call it a mistake. He does not call it a tragedy. He does not call it a failure. It is a mystery: something hidden in the counsels of God, now revealed through the apostolic witness, that explains how the plan of salvation works from beginning to end.

The mystery is this: God hardened Israel in part, for a time, so that the gospel could go to the Gentiles, so that the Gentiles could be grafted into the olive tree, so that Israel could be provoked to jealousy, so that when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in, all Israel could be saved. Every step in this sequence is deliberate. Every element serves the whole. The hardening serves the inclusion. The inclusion serves the provocation. The provocation serves the restoration. And the restoration serves the glory of God.

But the mystery does not end with sequence. It extends to fellowship. Paul tells the Ephesians that the mystery of Christ, *which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men*, has now been revealed by the Spirit: *that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel* (Ephesians 3:5-6). The mystery is not merely

that the Gentiles receive salvation alongside Israel. It is that they are brought into the same body, made fellowheirs of the same promise, joined to the same covenant people through the same Messiah. This is a fellowship that was hidden in the counsels of God from the foundation of the world, and it is now being revealed through the church.

And the purpose of this revelation is staggering. Paul says that the church exists *to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Ephesians 3:10-11). The fellowship of Jew and Gentile in one body is God's demonstration to the angelic realm. Principalities and powers are watching. Through the church, they are learning something about the wisdom of God that they could not have known any other way. The plan that hardened Israel, scattered the tribes, opened a door to the nations, grafted wild branches into a cultivated tree, and is now engineering the restoration of the natural branches; this plan, in all its layered complexity, is a display of wisdom so profound that heaven itself is being educated by it. The hardening was not a detour. It was the mechanism by which God put His manifold wisdom on display before the entire created order.

Beginning at Moses, we can see the pattern laid down from the start. God hardened Pharaoh to display His power and declare His name throughout all the earth. He withheld understanding from Israel in the wilderness, even as He fed them with manna and led them with fire. He commissioned Isaiah to make the hearts of His people fat, knowing that the blindness would persist through destruction, exile, and centuries of scattering. And then He sent His Son into the very nation He had blinded, not to condemn them, but to save them. Not to heal them yet, but to set in motion the sequence of events that would lead to their ultimate healing: His death, His

resurrection, the outpouring of the Spirit, the calling of the first fruits, the inclusion of Gentiles, and finally, the return of the Deliverer out of Zion.

In him, all the promises of God are yes. And amen. The blindness is real, but it is temporary. The judgment is severe, but it is measured. The hardening is painful, but it is purposeful. And the God who imposed it is the same God who will lift it. Because He is faithful to His covenant. Because His gifts are irrevocable. And because He has sworn by Himself, and He cannot lie.

In the next chapter, we will trace how the gospel made its transition from Israel to the Gentile world, beginning with Peter's vision, continuing through Paul's ministry, and culminating in the remarkable declaration that salvation, which is *of the Jews* (John 4:22), was now being extended to those who had been *strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world* (Ephesians 2:12).

## Chapter 9

# The Transition of the Gospel

In the previous chapter, we traced the mystery of Israel's hardening and saw that it was not an accident but a deliberate, judicial act of God, imposed for a purpose and limited to a season. The blindness was real. The nation that possessed the oracles, the temple, the priesthood, and the promises was rendered incapable of recognising its own Messiah. And we saw that this hardening served the larger plan: it opened a door to the Gentile world so that the fulness of the nations might come in before the blindness is finally lifted and all Israel is saved.

But the transition from Israel to the Gentiles did not happen in a single moment. It was not a clean break in which God turned away from one people and turned toward another. The gospel did not arrive among the Gentiles because God had finished with Israel. It arrived because God was working out a sequence that had been embedded in the covenant from the beginning. The transition was orderly, progressive, and at every stage it followed a principle that Paul would later state explicitly: *to the Jew first, and also to the Greek* (Romans 1:16).

This chapter will trace how the gospel moved from Israel to the nations. We will begin with Christ's own ministry, which was

confined almost entirely to the house of Israel. We will then follow the opening of the door to the Gentiles through Peter's vision and the conversion of Cornelius. We will trace Paul's consistent pattern of going to the synagogue first in every city he entered. And we will see that the gospel's expansion to the Gentile world was not a replacement of Israel but a strategic extension of the covenant promises, carried out in the order that God had established from the foundation of the world.

### **To the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel**

Christ's earthly ministry had a stated scope, and He declared it openly. When a Canaanite woman from the region of Tyre and Sidon cried out to Him for the healing of her demon possessed daughter, He did not respond. The disciples urged Him to send her away. And when He finally addressed her, His words were startling in their directness:

*"But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 15:24 KJV)*

This was not a casual remark. It was a declaration of mission. Christ came for the house of Israel. He came for the covenant people. He came to fulfil the promises that God had made to the fathers. His incarnation, His ministry, His miracles, His teaching, His death, and His resurrection were all directed, in the first instance, toward the people with whom God had entered into covenant.

The woman persisted. She fell at His feet and worshipped Him. Lord, help me, she said. And His answer, though often softened in modern pulpits, was pointed: *It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs* (Matthew 15:26). The children are Israel. The bread is the covenant provision. The dogs are the Gentiles. This is not cruelty. This is priority. There is an order to

God's plan, and Christ was operating within that order. The woman understood it. She did not take offence. She accepted her position and asked only for the crumbs that fall from the master's table. And Christ healed her daughter, commending her great faith.

But the point stands. The bread belongs to the children first. The Gentile world was not excluded from God's ultimate purpose, for the Abrahamic promise always included the blessing of all families of the earth. But the sequence matters. To the Jew first. The covenant people receive the word, the ministry, the signs, the Messiah Himself. And only then, in God's time, does the gospel extend outward.

This priority was not unique to the encounter with the Canaanite woman. When Christ sent out the twelve apostles on their first mission, His instructions were explicit:

*"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: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 10:5-6 KJV)*

The Gentile world was off limits. The Samaritans, who were a mixed population with a compromised worship, were off limits. The mission was Israel. Only Israel. The twelve were sent to announce the kingdom of God to the people of the covenant, to heal their sick, to raise their dead, and to cast out their demons. This was not a temporary measure born of convenience. It was a theological principle rooted in the structure of God's plan.

Even after the resurrection, when Christ gave His final instructions to the apostles, the priority was maintained. In Acts 1, the disciples asked Him: *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* (Acts 1:6). Christ did not correct the premise of their question. He did not say that the kingdom would no longer be restored to Israel. He said only that the timing was not theirs to

know. The Father has put the times and seasons in His own authority. But what Christ did tell them was this:

*"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."  
(Acts 1:6-8 KJV)*

Notice the sequence. Jerusalem first. Then Judaea. Then Samaria. Then the uttermost part of the earth. The gospel would radiate outward from the centre. It would begin at the covenant city, extend to the covenant land, reach the near neighbours, and eventually touch the ends of the earth. But the starting point is always Jerusalem. The starting point is always Israel.

### **Pentecost and the Jewish Foundation**

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost confirmed this priority. The miracle occurred in Jerusalem. It occurred during one of the three pilgrimage festivals when Jews from every nation gathered in the holy city. Luke is careful to note the audience:

*"And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." (Acts 2:5 KJV)*

They were Jews. They were from every nation. They had come to Jerusalem for the feast. And when they heard the apostles speaking in their own languages, and when Peter stood up to preach, the sermon was addressed entirely to Israel:

*"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and*

*wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:" (Acts 2:22 KJV)*

And again:

*"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36 KJV)*

The audience is the house of Israel. The message is that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they crucified, is the Lord and the Christ. The three thousand who were baptised that day were Jews. The church that was initiated at Pentecost was a Jewish church. Its members were Israelites who had accepted their Messiah. They continued in the apostles' doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers. They met daily in the temple. They had favour with all the people. And there was not a Gentile among them.

This is an important point that is often overlooked. For years after Pentecost, the church was exclusively Jewish. The apostles preached in the temple courts. They performed signs and wonders among the people of Israel. They were arrested by the Sanhedrin, beaten, and released. They testified before the council. And throughout all of this, they understood their mission as being directed to Israel. The door to the Gentiles had not yet been opened, because the time had not yet come.

### **Stephen, the Scattering, and Samaria**

The first movement outward came through persecution, not through a deliberate missionary strategy. Stephen was stoned. A great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem. And Luke records the result:

*"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." (Acts 8:4 KJV)*

The scattering of the church from Jerusalem was the mechanism by which the gospel began to move beyond the holy city. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them (Acts 8:5). The Samaritans, who had been excluded from the apostles' first mission in Matthew 10, now received the word. This was the second stage of Christ's outline in Acts 1:8. Jerusalem had been reached. Now Samaria was being reached. But even here, the apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to confirm the work and to lay hands on the Samaritan believers so that they might receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17). The authority still resided with the Jewish apostles in the covenant city. The centre was still Jerusalem.

Philip was then directed by the Spirit to the road between Jerusalem and Gaza, where he encountered the Ethiopian eunuch, a God fearer who had been to Jerusalem to worship and was reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip preached Jesus to him beginning from Isaiah 53, where the eunuch was reading, and the eunuch was baptised (Acts 8:26-38). The gospel was beginning to touch individuals on the fringes of the covenant community. But the decisive opening to the Gentile world had not yet occurred. That required something more dramatic. It required a direct intervention from heaven.

### **Peter's Vision and the Conversion of Cornelius**

The opening of the door to the Gentiles is one of the most significant events in the entire New Testament, and Luke gives it an extraordinary amount of space. The account occupies nearly all of Acts 10 and is rehearsed again in Acts 11 and referenced again in Acts 15. This is not a footnote. This is a theological turning point.

The story begins with Cornelius, a Roman centurion stationed in Caesarea. He is described as a devout man who feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and who prayed to God always (Acts 10:2). He was, in other words, a God fearer: a

Gentile who had come to revere the God of Israel but had not become a proselyte through circumcision. He stood at the threshold of the covenant community but had not crossed it.

An angel appeared to Cornelius and told him to send for Peter. At the same time, Peter was on a rooftop in Joppa, and he fell into a trance. He saw a great sheet descending from heaven, filled with all manner of four-footed beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air. A voice said: *Rise, Peter; kill, and eat* (Acts 10:13). Peter refused. He had never eaten anything common or unclean. The voice replied: *What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common* (Acts 10:15). This happened three times, and then the sheet was received up into heaven.

While Peter was still puzzling over the vision, the men sent by Cornelius arrived. The Spirit told Peter to go with them without hesitation. Peter went to Caesarea, entered the house of a Gentile (something a Jewish man would not ordinarily do), and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. And while he was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. The Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were astonished, *because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost* (Acts 10:45).

The word *also* is critical. The gift had been given to Israel at Pentecost. Now it was being given *also* to the Gentiles. Not instead of. Also. The sequence was maintained. The Jew first. And *also* the Greek.

Peter's own interpretation of the event is telling. He commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord. And when he returned to Jerusalem, the Jewish believers criticized him: *Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them* (Acts 11:3). Peter rehearsed the entire sequence of events and concluded:

*"Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17 KJV)*

And when the Jerusalem church heard this, they held their peace and glorified God, saying: *Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life (Acts 11:18)*. The word *also* appears again. God has *also* granted repentance to the Gentiles. This is an addition, not a substitution. The covenant people received the gospel first. Now the Gentiles are being added to it. But the foundation is Jewish. The apostles are Jewish. The Messiah is Jewish. The Scriptures are Jewish. The promises are Jewish. The Gentiles are being brought into something that already existed and already belonged to Israel.

### **Paul's Commission and His Consistent Pattern**

If the conversion of Cornelius was the door swinging open, Paul was the man appointed to walk through it. He was called as the apostle to the Gentiles. Christ told Ananias: *He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel (Acts 9:15)*. Notice that even in Paul's commission, the children of Israel are included. He is not sent to the Gentiles instead of Israel. He is sent to bear Christ's name before Gentiles, kings, and Israel.

And yet, for all his identification as the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul's consistent practice in every city he visited was to go to the synagogue first. This pattern is not incidental. It is not a matter of convenience. It is a theological conviction that governs his entire ministry.

In Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas entered the synagogue on the sabbath day and were invited to speak. Paul preached a lengthy sermon tracing God's dealings with Israel from the exodus through David to the coming of Christ (Acts 13:16-41). It was a

sermon addressed to *men of Israel, and ye that fear God* (Acts 13:16). When the Jews rejected the message, Paul and Barnabas declared:

*"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." (Acts 13:46 KJV)*

The word *first* is decisive. It was necessary. Not optional, not preferable, but necessary. The word of God had to be spoken to the Jews first. This was not a courtesy extended to the host nation. It was a requirement of the covenant. God's promises were made to Israel. Christ came for Israel. The gospel must be preached to Israel before it can be extended to anyone else. And only when Israel (or, in this case, the local Jewish community) refuses the message does Paul turn to the Gentiles. Even then, he does not abandon the pattern. He will go to the synagogue again in the next city.

In Thessalonica: *And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbaths reasoned with them out of the scriptures* (Acts 17:2). In Corinth: *And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks* (Acts 18:4). When the Jews opposed him in Corinth, he said: *Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles* (Acts 18:6). And yet, when he arrived in Ephesus, the very next major city, he went into the synagogue again and reasoned with the Jews (Acts 18:19). When he returned to Ephesus for an extended stay, he spent three months in the synagogue, *disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God* (Acts 19:8).

The pattern never changed. In every city, Paul went to the synagogue first. He preached Christ from the Scriptures to the Jewish community and to the God fearers who gathered with them.

Some believed. Many did not. And when the resistance became entrenched, he turned to the Gentiles. But the next city, the next synagogue, the same pattern. To the Jew first. Always.

### **The Pattern Confirmed at Rome**

The book of Acts begins in Jerusalem and ends in Rome. And the pattern that governed every stage of the gospel's expansion is confirmed one final time in the last chapter. Paul arrived in Rome as a prisoner. And his first action was not to preach to the Roman populace. It was to call together the leaders of the Jewish community:

*"And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans." (Acts 28:17 KJV)*

He explained his situation, testified concerning the hope of Israel, and spent an entire day expounding and testifying the kingdom of God, *persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening* (Acts 28:23). He began at Moses. Some believed. Some did not. And when they departed in disagreement, Paul pronounced the judicial sentence that brings the entire book of Acts to its theological conclusion:

*"And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and*

*hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Acts 28:25-27 KJV)*

This is Isaiah 6:9-10, the very passage we examined in the previous chapter on Israel's judicial hardening. Paul quotes it at the end of Acts as the definitive explanation for why the Jewish community, as a whole, has not accepted the gospel. And then he adds:

*"Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." (Acts 28:28 KJV)*

This is the climax of the book of Acts. The salvation of God, which originated with Israel, which was preached to Israel first in every city, which was offered to the Jewish community at every stage of Paul's ministry, is now being sent to the Gentiles. And the reason it is being sent to the Gentiles is not that God has abandoned Israel. It is that Israel, under the judicial hardening imposed by God Himself through the prophet Isaiah, has not received it. The blindness that Isaiah was commissioned to impose is still operative. The heart of the people is waxed gross. Their ears are dull. Their eyes are closed. And until the appointed time, until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in, the hardening continues, and the gospel goes outward to the nations.

### **To the Jew First, and Also to the Greek**

Paul's letter to the Romans provides the theological framework for the pattern that Acts narrates historically. In his opening statement of the gospel, Paul writes:

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;*

*to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:16 KJV)*

This is not merely a description of historical sequence, as if Paul were saying that the Jews happened to hear the gospel before the Greeks. It is a theological principle. The gospel is *to the Jew first*. The power of God unto salvation operates according to an order that reflects the structure of God's covenant. Israel is first because the promises were made to Israel. The Messiah came from Israel. The Scriptures were entrusted to Israel. The covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises all belong to Israel (Romans 9:4). The gospel does not bypass this history. It works through it.

And the word *also* is again the key. Also to the Greek. The Gentile world is included, but it is included as an addition to something that belongs to Israel. The Gentiles are not the original recipients. They are the beneficiaries of a plan that was always centred on Israel and that will return to Israel when the time of their hardening is complete.

Paul reinforces this in Romans 2:9-10, where the same order appears in the context of judgment: *tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile*. The priority applies in both directions. Israel is first in receiving the gospel. Israel is first in being judged for rejecting the gospel. And the Gentiles follow in both cases. This is not ethnic favouritism. It is covenant order. God made promises to a specific people, and those promises create both privileges and responsibilities that belong to that people before anyone else.

## **Salvation Is of the Jews**

Christ Himself stated the principle with complete clarity. In His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, He said:

*"Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." (John 4:22 KJV)*

Salvation is of the Jews. It originates with them. It flows through them. The Messiah is Jewish. The Scriptures are Jewish. The covenant is Jewish. The promises are Jewish. The apostles are Jewish. The first church is Jewish. Everything that the Gentile world has received in the way of the knowledge of God, it has received through Israel. Paul understood this when he asked: *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God* (Romans 3:1-2).

The oracles of God were committed to Israel. Not to Rome. Not to Athens. Not to Babylon. Not to Canada, America or Australia. Not to Germany, England or South Africa. Not to any Gentile civilisation, however sophisticated. The knowledge of the one true God, the revelation of His character, the record of His acts, the prophecies of His plan, and the terms of His covenant were all entrusted to one people. And the gospel that Paul preached to the Gentile world was drawn entirely from those Jewish oracles. He preached Christ out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets (Acts 28:23). There was no other source.

This means that the Gentile church owes its entire existence to Israel. It did not arise independently. It was not a parallel development. It was grafted into an olive tree that had been cultivated for millennia by the patient work of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The roots are Jewish. The trunk is Jewish. And any branch that was added from the wild, as Paul will explain in

detail in Romans 11, was added to something that already existed and already belonged to Israel.

### **Expansion, Not Replacement**

The transition of the gospel from Israel to the Gentiles has been misunderstood for centuries. It has been read as a story of replacement: God tried Israel, Israel failed, and so God moved on to the church. The Jews had their chance, they blew it, and now the Gentiles inherit the promises. This is the essence of replacement theology, and it is precisely what Paul warns against in Romans 11:

*"Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." (Romans 11:18 KJV)*

The Gentile branches do not support the tree. The tree supports them. The root is the patriarchal covenant, the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And the Gentile church, far from replacing Israel, depends entirely upon Israel's covenant for its own existence. If the root is holy, so are the branches. If the root were cut off, the branches would die.

Paul anticipates the Gentile response: *Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in* (Romans 11:19). In other words, Israel was rejected so that we could take their place. And Paul's answer is sharp: *Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee* (Romans 11:20-21). The Gentile church stands by faith, not by right. It was grafted in by grace, and it can be removed if it falls into the same arrogance and unbelief that led to Israel's temporary removal.

The transition of the gospel, therefore, is not a story of abandonment. It is a story of strategic expansion. God did not

discard Israel and start over with the Gentiles. He opened a door to the Gentile world while maintaining His covenant with Israel. The hardening is temporary. The grafting of the wild branches is conditional and also temporary. And the purpose of the entire operation is to provoke Israel to jealousy, to bring in the fulness of the Gentiles, and to set the stage for the restoration of all Israel. The transition serves the covenant. It does not replace it.

### **The Prophetic Foundation**

The transition of the gospel to the Gentiles was not an improvisation. It was prophesied in the Torah, in the Prophets, and in the Writings. Moses himself warned Israel that God would provoke them to jealousy through a nation that was not a nation:

*"They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." (Deuteronomy 32:21 KJV)*

Paul quotes this passage in Romans 10:19 as evidence that Israel should have known that God would extend His dealings beyond the covenant nation. Moses told them. It was in the Torah from the beginning. God would use a foolish nation, a people who were not a people, to provoke Israel to jealousy. And that is precisely what happened when the gospel went to the Gentile world. The Gentiles, who had no covenant, no promises, no Torah, no temple, and no Messiah, received by faith what Israel had rejected in unbelief. And this was intended to provoke Israel to reconsider.

Isaiah went even further. Paul quotes Isaiah 65:1-2 in Romans 10:20-21:

*"But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I*

*have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." (Romans 10:20-21 KJV), citing Isaiah 65.1-2*

The Gentiles, who were not seeking God, found Him. Israel, to whom God has been stretching out His hands all day long, refused to respond. This is not God abandoning Israel. It is God extending His hands to Israel while simultaneously revealing Himself to the Gentile world. Both operations are running concurrently. The Gentiles are being gathered in. And God's hands remain stretched out to His disobedient and gainsaying people.

The Psalms confirm this as well. Paul quotes Psalm 19:4 in Romans 10:18 to show that the gospel has gone out to the ends of the earth: *Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.* And Psalm 117, the shortest psalm in the Bible, commands the Gentile nations to praise the Lord: *O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever* (Psalm 117:1-2). Paul cites this in Romans 15:11 as part of a chain of quotations showing that the inclusion of the Gentiles was anticipated across the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. It is the mystery of the ages (Ephesian 3.4-6) that Paul taught the Ephesian church.

*"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:12-13 KJV) "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;" (Ephesians 2:19-20 KJV)*

The transition of the gospel was not a departure from the plan. It was the plan. But it was a plan with an order, a sequence, and a purpose. To the Jew first. Then also to the Greek. And the purpose of the Gentile inclusion is not to replace Israel but to serve the larger design: to provoke jealousy, to bring in the fulness, and to prepare the way for the day when the Deliverer comes out of Zion and turns away ungodliness from Jacob (Romans 11:26).

### **Looking Ahead**

We have now traced the gospel from its origin among the covenant people, through its extension to the Gentile world, and we have seen that at every stage the principle holds: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. Christ came for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Spirit was poured out on Jews at Pentecost. The door to the Gentiles was opened through Peter's vision. Paul went to the synagogue first in every city. And the entire transition was anticipated in the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings.

But what does it mean, practically, for a Gentile to receive the gospel? What is the nature of the relationship between the Gentile believer and the covenant people of God? If the promises belong to Israel, and if salvation is of the Jews, then how do the Gentiles participate? The answer lies in the image that Paul develops in Romans 11, an image drawn from the agricultural world of ancient Israel: the olive tree. In the next chapter, we will examine the grafting process by which the wild olive branches are inserted into the cultivated tree of Israel's promises, and we will see what this means for the identity, the responsibilities, and the hope of the Gentile church.

## *Chapter 10*

# **The Grafting Process**

In the previous chapter, we traced the transition of the gospel from Israel to the Gentile world and saw that the expansion followed a consistent order: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. Christ came for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Spirit fell on Jews at Pentecost. The door to the Gentiles was opened through Peter's vision and confirmed through Paul's ministry. At every stage, the gospel went first to the synagogue, and only when the local Jewish community refused it did the apostles turn to the surrounding Gentile population. The transition was not a replacement. It was an extension, carried out in the sequence that God had established from the beginning.

But the transition raises a question that demands a careful answer. If the promises belong to Israel, and if the covenant was made with Israel, then what happens when a Gentile believes? What is the nature of that person's relationship to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Does the Gentile believer receive a separate set of promises? Does God establish a new covenant with the Gentiles alongside the one He made with Israel? Or is something else happening entirely?

Paul answers this question in Romans 11 with an image drawn from the agricultural world of the ancient Near East: the olive tree. It is one of the most important metaphors in all of Scripture, and it has been one of the most consistently misunderstood. The image does not describe two separate trees. It does not describe two parallel covenants. It describes one tree, cultivated over millennia by the patient hand of God, into which the Gentile believers have been inserted by an act of sovereign grace. The Gentiles have not been given their own tree. They have been grafted into Israel's.

This chapter will examine the olive tree metaphor in detail. We will consider the root, the natural branches, the wild branches, the breaking off, the grafting in, the warning against boasting, and the promise of regrafting. And we will see that the entire image reinforces what we have argued from the beginning: that God's plan of salvation is centred on Israel, that the Gentiles participate in that plan by being joined to Israel's covenant, and that the temporary removal of the natural branches does not mean they have been permanently discarded.

### **The Good Olive Tree**

Paul introduces the olive tree metaphor in Romans 11:16-24 as part of his extended argument about Israel's future. He has just stated that Israel's stumbling was not a fall from which there is no recovery. Their failure served a purpose: *through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy* (Romans 11:11). He has argued that if Israel's diminishing brought riches to the Gentile world, then Israel's fulness will bring something far greater: *life from the dead* (Romans 11:15). And now he turns to the olive tree to explain the relationship between Israel and the Gentile believers in concrete, visual terms.

He begins with the root:

*"For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches." -- Romans 11:16*

The first fruit and the root refer to the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The promises were made to them. The covenant was established with them. They are the foundation of the entire tree. And if the root is holy, then the branches that grow from that root are holy by virtue of their connection to it. The holiness of the tree does not originate in the branches. It originates in the root. This is a critical distinction that governs everything that follows. The Gentile church does not generate its own holiness, its own covenant, or its own standing before God. Whatever holiness it possesses, it possesses because it has been connected to a root that was made holy by the covenant promises of God to the patriarchs.

The olive tree itself represents the covenant community of God's people, the cultivated planting that God has tended from the time of Abraham. It is not a new tree planted at Pentecost. It is not a Gentile tree. It is Israel's tree, grown from Israel's root, nourished by Israel's promises. Paul calls it a *good olive tree* (Romans 11:24), using the word that implies cultivation, care, and the purposeful labour of the one who planted it. God planted this tree. God cultivated it. God tended it through centuries of rebellion, pruning, discipline, and restoration. And when the time came to include the Gentiles, He did not plant a second tree. He grafted wild branches into the one tree that already existed.

### **The Breaking Off of the Natural Branches**

Paul then addresses the fact that some of the natural branches have been removed:

*"And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and*

*with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." (Romans 11:17-18 KJV)*

Some of the branches were broken off. Not all. Paul is careful with his language. He does not say that the entire tree was stripped of its natural branches. He says *some* were removed. There has always been a remnant within Israel that responded to God in faith. In the time of Elijah, seven thousand had not bowed the knee to Baal (Romans 11:4). In Paul's own time, there was *a remnant according to the election of grace* (Romans 11:5). The Jewish believers in the first century, the apostles, the three thousand at Pentecost, the thousands more who believed in Jerusalem (Acts 21:20), these were natural branches that remained on the tree. The tree was never entirely stripped. The remnant remained.

But many branches were removed. The majority of the nation, under the judicial hardening described in the previous chapters, did not receive the gospel. And in their place, wild olive branches were grafted in. The wild olive is uncultivated. It produces small, bitter fruit. Left to itself, it is of limited value. But when a shoot from a wild olive is grafted into a cultivated tree, it draws nourishment from the root system of the good tree and produces the fruit of the cultivated variety. The wild branch contributes nothing to the root. The root contributes everything to the wild branch.

This is the position of the Gentile church. It was wild. It was uncultivated. It had no covenant, no promises, no Torah, no Messiah, and no hope. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Paul describes this condition plainly in Ephesians 2:

*"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:" (Ephesians 2:12 KJV)*

This was the Gentile condition before the grafting. No Christ. Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Strangers from the covenants of promise. No hope. Without God. The Gentile world was not a parallel covenant community running alongside Israel. It was outside the covenant entirely. And the only way Gentiles could gain access to the promises, to the hope, and to God Himself was to be brought into the existing covenant community. That is what the grafting accomplished. The wild branches were inserted into the cultivated tree and began to partake of its root and fatness.

### **Partakers of the Root and Fatness**

Paul's language is precise. The Gentile believers *partake of* the root and fatness of the olive tree. They do not own the root. They do not replace the root. They do not become the root. They partake of it. They draw nourishment from it. They benefit from promises that were not originally made to them but into which they have been graciously inserted.

The root is the Abrahamic covenant. The promises that God made to Abraham, and confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, are the source of life for the entire tree. The promise of a great nation. The promise of a specific land. The promise that in Abraham's seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. These are the promises that nourish every branch on the tree, natural and wild alike. When a Gentile believes the gospel and is grafted into the olive tree, that person begins to draw life from these same promises. Not from a different set of promises. Not from a Gentile covenant. From the Abrahamic covenant.

Paul makes this connection explicit in Galatians 3:

*"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29 KJV)*

Gentile believers who are in Christ become Abraham's seed. They become heirs of the promise. Not heirs of a different promise, but heirs of the same promise that was made to Abraham. This is what it means to be grafted into the olive tree. The wild branch does not bring its own rootstock. It is joined to the existing root and draws its life from there.

This has profound implications for how the Gentile church understands itself. If the root is the Abrahamic covenant, and if the Gentile church draws its life from that root, then the Gentile church cannot claim independence from Israel's story. It cannot read the Hebrew Bible as the history of a people with whom it has no connection. It cannot treat the promises to Israel as belonging to a dispensation that has been superseded. The promises to Israel are the very promises that sustain the Gentile church. Without them, the wild branches would wither and die. The church's identity is derivative. It is derived from Israel. It is derived from the Abrahamic covenant. It is derived from the root.

### **Boast Not Against the Branches**

Having established that the Gentile believers partake of the root, Paul immediately issues a warning that could not be more direct:

*"Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." (Romans 11:18 KJV)*

This is Paul's answer to replacement theology, stated centuries before the doctrine was formally articulated. Do not boast against the natural branches. Do not look at the broken off branches and conclude that they have been permanently discarded. Do not imagine that the Gentile church has replaced Israel in God's affections. Because if we boast, remember this: we do not bear the root. The root bears us. We are not the source. We are the

beneficiary. We did not create the covenant. We were brought into it. And the moment we forget that, the moment we begin to think that the tree exists for your sake and not for Israel's, we are in danger.

Paul anticipates the objection. The Gentile believer might say: *Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in* (Romans 11:19). In other words, Israel was cut off to make room for me. Their loss is my gain. Their rejection is my election. Paul does not deny the factual claim. The branches were indeed broken off, and the wild branches were indeed grafted in. But the conclusion that the Gentile draws from this fact is dangerously wrong. The breaking off of the natural branches was not a permanent disposal. It was a temporary judicial measure, and it was done for reasons that transcend the Gentile church's own inclusion.

Paul's response is sober:

*"Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." (Romans 11:20-21 KJV)*

The natural branches were broken off because of unbelief. The wild branches stand by faith. Not by right. Not by inheritance. Not by any permanent transfer of covenant privilege. By faith. And faith can fail. Paul does not say that it will fail. He says that if the Gentile church becomes highminded, if it develops the same arrogance that led to Israel's temporary removal, then it too can be cut off. The warning is unmistakable. The Gentile church occupies a position of grace, not a position of entitlement. And the God who did not spare the natural branches will not spare the wild ones either, if they fall into the same sin.

This is one of the most neglected warnings in the entire New Testament. For nearly two millennia, the Gentile church has done precisely what Paul warned against. It has boasted against the broken off branches. It has constructed an entire theological framework, replacement theology, that claims the church has permanently replaced Israel in the purposes of God. It has read the promises to Israel and claimed them for itself while assigning the curses to the Jews. It has looked at the suffering of the Jewish people across the centuries and interpreted that suffering as proof that God has abandoned them. And in doing so, it has fulfilled Paul's warning to the letter. It has become highminded. It has failed to fear. And it has boasted against the very branches from whose root it draws its own life.

### **The Goodness and Severity of God**

Paul draws a distinction that is essential to understanding the olive tree:

*"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." (Romans 11:22 KJV)*

Two attributes of God are on display simultaneously. Severity toward the natural branches that fell. Goodness toward the wild branches that were grafted in. But the goodness is conditional. It continues *if thou continue in his goodness*. Otherwise, the wild branches will also be cut off. The condition is clear. The Gentile church continues in its position only as long as it continues in God's goodness. And God's goodness, in this context, includes the recognition that the root is holy, that the promises belong to Israel, that the breaking off is temporary, and that the Gentile church exists within, not above, the covenant structure that God established with Abraham.

The severity that fell on the natural branches was not arbitrary cruelty. It was the judicial consequence of unbelief, the same unbelief that Paul has been tracing since the commission of Isaiah in chapter 6. The hardening was imposed. The blindness was decreed. And the branches that refused to believe were removed from the tree, not destroyed, but removed from their position of fruitfulness. They still exist. They are still identifiable as Israel. The Jewish people have not disappeared from the earth. And Paul's next statement explains why.

### **The Promise of Regrafting**

If the warning against boasting is the most neglected passage in Romans 11, the promise of regrafting may be the most astonishing:

*"And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again."  
(Romans 11:23 KJV)*

The natural branches can be grafted back in. The breaking off is not permanent. The removal is not irreversible. God is able to graft them in again. And Paul does not present this as a mere theoretical possibility. He presents it as a certainty, grounded in the nature of God and in the logic of the olive tree itself:

*"For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"  
(Romans 11:24 KJV)*

The argument is from the lesser to the greater. If God was able to take wild branches, branches that by nature did not belong to the cultivated tree, and graft them in contrary to nature, then how much more is He able to take the natural branches, the branches that belong to the tree by right of covenant, and graft them back into

their own olive tree? The phrase *their own olive tree* is devastating to replacement theology. The tree belongs to them. It is their tree. The wild branches are guests. They have been graciously included. But the tree belongs to the natural branches. And their return to the tree is not only possible; it is, in the logic of the metaphor, more natural and more fitting than the inclusion of the Gentiles ever was.

Paul has already told us when this regrafting will occur. He stated it as a mystery: *blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved* (Romans 11:25-26). The hardening is partial and temporary. It has an expiration date. When the fulness of the Gentiles has been gathered, the blindness will be lifted, and all Israel will be saved. The natural branches will be grafted back into their own tree. And the tree will be complete: root, natural branches, and wild branches together, all drawing life from the same Abrahamic root, all sustained by the same covenant promises, all testifying to the faithfulness of the God who planted the tree in the first place.

### **Contrary to Nature**

There is a detail in Paul's argument that is easily overlooked but that carries enormous theological weight. Paul says that the grafting of the Gentiles was done *contrary to nature* (Romans 11:24). In the natural world of olive cultivation, a farmer would graft cultivated material onto cultivated stock, or at most replace an unproductive branch with a proven variety. What no farmer would do is take a wild, unproductive shoot and insert it into a carefully cultivated tree. The wild branch has nothing to offer. Yet that is precisely what Paul describes.

And that is precisely Paul's point. The inclusion of the Gentiles was not a natural development. It was not the predictable outcome of historical forces. It was an act of sovereign grace that cut against the grain of the natural order. The Gentiles had no claim on the

covenant. They had no relationship with the God of Israel. They were, as Paul says in Ephesians 2:12, without God in the world. Their inclusion in the olive tree was an anomaly, a work of God that defied expectation and overturned convention. It was grace in its most undiluted form.

If the Gentile inclusion was contrary to nature, then the regrafting of the natural branches is *according to* nature. It is the more expected outcome. It is the more fitting restoration. The branches that were broken off belonged to the tree. They grew from its root. They were cultivated by its keeper. Their removal was a temporary measure, not a permanent condition. And their restoration is not merely hoped for; it is, Paul argues, more natural and more certain than the Gentile inclusion ever was. The God who did the harder thing (grafting wild branches contrary to nature) will surely do the easier thing (restoring the natural branches to their own tree).

### **Made Nigh by the Blood of Christ**

Paul's letter to the Ephesians provides a complementary perspective on the grafting process. While Romans 11 uses the image of the olive tree, Ephesians 2 uses the language of citizenship and household membership. The two images describe the same reality from different angles.

Paul reminds the Gentile believers of their former condition: *at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world* (Ephesians 2:12). They were outside. They were aliens. They were strangers. They had no access to the covenant promises. And then:

*"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13 KJV)*

They have been brought near. Not near to a new covenant that has nothing to do with Israel. Near to the commonwealth of Israel. Near to the covenants of promise. The blood of Christ did not create a separate path for the Gentiles. It brought the Gentiles into the existing path. It opened the door of the commonwealth to those who had been aliens. It gave access to the covenants to those who had been strangers.

Paul continues: *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us* (Ephesians 2:14). Both one. Not two parallel communities. One. When speaking to the Gentile church in Corinth, Paul refers to the Israelite patriarchs as "our fathers".

*"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;" (1 Corinthians 10:1-2 KJV)*

The wall that separated Jew and Gentile has been broken down. Not so that the Gentiles could go their own way, but so that they could be joined to the same body. The result is described in terms that echo the olive tree:

*"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;" (Ephesians 2:19 KJV)*

Fellowcitizens. Not citizens of a different nation, but fellowcitizens with the saints. Members of the same household. Built upon the same foundation: the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself as the chief corner stone (Ephesians 2:20). The Gentile believers have not been given a separate building. They have been built into the same structure. They share the same foundation. They are part of the same household. And the

household is Israel's household, now expanded by grace to include those who were once far off.

### **One New Man**

In the midst of this argument, Paul introduces a phrase that requires careful handling:

*"...for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;" (Ephesians 2:15 KJV)*

Christ has made of two (Jew and Gentile) one new man. This has sometimes been interpreted to mean that the categories of Jew and Gentile have been abolished entirely, that in the church there is no longer any distinction, and that the promises to Israel have been dissolved into a universal, undifferentiated body of believers. But this interpretation contradicts everything Paul says in Romans 9 through 11, where the distinction between Israel and the Gentiles is the very foundation of his argument. If the distinction had been abolished, there would be no olive tree, no natural branches, no wild branches, no breaking off, and no regrafting. The entire metaphor depends on the distinction being maintained.

The one new man, therefore, does not mean the erasure of Israel's identity. It means the creation of a unified body in which Jew and Gentile are reconciled to God and to one another through the cross. The enmity has been abolished. The wall of partition has been removed. But the covenant relationship that God established with Israel remains intact. The one new man is not a replacement for Israel. It is the fellowship of Jew and Gentile within the framework of Israel's covenant, made possible by the blood of Christ, sustained by the root of the Abrahamic promises, and destined for the same inheritance.

Paul makes this explicit in Ephesians 3, where he describes the mystery that has now been revealed:

*"That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:" (Ephesians 3:6 KJV)*

Fellowheirs. Same body. Partakers of the same promise. The Gentiles do not receive a different inheritance. They share in the inheritance that was promised to Israel. They are joined to the same body. They partake of the same promise. This is the grafting process described in covenantal language. The wild branches are drawing from the same root. The foreigners have become fellowcitizens. The strangers have become members of the household. And the promise that sustains them all is the promise that God made to Abraham: *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed* (Genesis 22:18).

### **The Lie of Replacement**

Replacement theology did not emerge from careful study of Scripture. It grew from hostility toward the Jewish people, planted early in the history of the church by men whose influence far exceeded their faithfulness to the text.

John Chrysostom, one of the most celebrated church fathers in Christian history, delivered a series of eight homilies in Antioch between 386 and 387 AD, known as *Adversus Judaeos*, "Against the Jews." What provoked him? Christians in his own congregation were attending synagogues, keeping the Sabbath, observing the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles, and fasting alongside the Jewish community. Rather than ask why his flock found the worship of God in its original form so compelling, Chrysostom attacked. He called the synagogue "a dwelling of demons." He called the Jewish people "abominable and lawless and murderous and enemies of God." He declared openly, "I hate the Jews, for they have

the Law and they insult it." He compared them to pigs and goats, saying they "live for their bellies" and "know but one thing: to fill their bellies and be drunk." The Anglican historian James Parkes called these homilies "the most horrible and violent denunciations of Judaism to be found in the writings of a Christian theologian." The Nazis reprinted and distributed these sermons throughout Germany and Austria during the Holocaust.

Over a thousand years later, Martin Luther, the father of the Protestant Reformation, published a 65,000-word treatise in 1543 titled *On the Jews and Their Lies*. In it, he laid out an eight-point programme against the Jewish people. He called them "a base, whoring people" and "poisonous envenomed worms." He advocated setting fire to their synagogues, destroying their homes, confiscating their prayer books and Talmudic writings, forbidding rabbis to teach on pain of death, abolishing safe-conduct on the highways, seizing their money, and putting them into forced labour. He wrote plainly: "We are at fault in not slaying them." The Nazis displayed this treatise at their Nuremberg rallies. In November 1938, just two weeks after Kristallnacht, a Lutheran bishop named Martin Sasse published a pamphlet connecting Luther's call for the burning of synagogues to its fulfilment by the Nazi regime.

These are not obscure figures on the margins of church history. Chrysostom was venerated as a Doctor of the Church and one of the Three Holy Hierarchs of Eastern Orthodoxy. Luther is regarded as the founding voice of the Reformation. And both men taught, with venom and conviction, that God is

done with Israel. That He is done with the Jews. That the church has replaced them.

This is the soil that replacement theology grows in. Not in the word of God. Not in the writings of Moses or the prophets. Not in anything Christ ever said. It grows in the anti-Jewish hatred of men who, for all their theological contribution, could not see past their contempt for the covenant people of God. And the theology they built on that contempt became the foundation of what we now call traditional Christianity.

But God says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." God says, "I have covenanted with you forever."

How do we reconcile these? We cannot. If God says the covenant is everlasting, and the church fathers say it was just a temporary contract and God has moved on, then one of them is lying. And it is not God.

Replacement theology does not elevate the church. It makes God a liar. It says that God made promises He did not keep. It says that He swore an oath and then changed His mind. And if God can change His mind about Israel, He can change His mind about you. If His covenant with Israel is not secure, then no covenant is secure. And if no covenant is secure, then we have no gospel. Because the gospel is rooted in the covenant faithfulness of God.

### **The Root Supports the Branches**

Returning to Romans 11, Paul's central point in the olive tree passage can be stated simply: the root supports the branches, not the other way around. *Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee* (Romans 11:18). This is the structural principle that governs the

entire relationship between the Gentile church and the covenant people of God.

The root is the Abrahamic covenant. The root is the promise of a great nation, a specific land, and the blessing of all families of the earth. The root is the oath that God swore to Abraham, confirmed to Isaac, and established with Jacob. The root is the calling that is irrevocable and the gifts that are without repentance (Romans 11:29). Everything that the Gentile church has received, it has received from this root. The knowledge of the one true God. The Scriptures. The Messiah. The Holy Spirit. The hope of resurrection. The promise of eternal life. All of it flows from the root that God planted when He called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and said: *I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing* (Genesis 12:2).

If the Gentile church severs itself from this root, if it claims independence from Israel's story, if it constructs a theology that relegates Israel to a bygone era and claims the promises for itself alone, it is sawing off the very branch on which it sits. The root bears the branches. And any branch that forgets this, that boasts against the natural branches, that becomes highminded and fails to fear, is in danger of being removed from the tree altogether.

This is not a theoretical danger. The history of the church is littered with the consequences of forgetting the root. The early church fathers began to distance themselves from Judaism within the first two centuries. The Council of Nicaea in 325 AD formally separated the observance of Passover from the Jewish calendar. The anti-Jewish legislation of the Roman Empire, often supported or advocated by Christian bishops, set a pattern that would persist for more than a millennium. The Crusades, the Inquisition, the pogroms of Eastern Europe, the expulsions from England, France, and Spain, and ultimately the Holocaust itself, all of these atrocities

were carried out in a cultural context shaped by a theology that said God was finished with the Jews. The branches boasted against the root. And the fruit of that boasting has been a trail of blood that stretches across twenty centuries.

Paul's warning was not hypothetical. It was prophetic.

### **Looking Ahead**

The olive tree tells us three things that are essential for understanding the rest of this book. First, the Gentile church does not exist independently of Israel's covenant. It has been grafted into Israel's tree and draws its life from Israel's root. Second, the removal of the natural branches is temporary, not permanent. God is able to graft them in again, and He has promised that He will do so when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in. Third, the Gentile church stands in its position by faith, not by right, and any arrogance that forgets the root and boasts against the broken off branches puts the wild branches in the same jeopardy that the natural branches once faced.

We have now completed Part III of this study. We have traced the mystery of Israel's hardening, the transition of the gospel from Israel to the Gentile world, and the grafting of the wild branches into the cultivated olive tree. We have seen that the scattering of Israel and the inclusion of the Gentiles are not the end of the story. They are the middle of the story. The hardening is partial and temporary. The grafting is conditional, temporary, and purposeful. And the entire operation serves a single goal: the restoration of all Israel and the fulfillment of every promise that God has made.

In Part IV, we turn to that restoration. We will begin where we have begun throughout this book: at Moses. For it was Moses, before Israel even entered the promised land, who prophesied both the scattering and the regathering, both the curse and the healing, both the breaking of the covenant and the circumcision of the heart.

Deuteronomy 30 is the seed from which every later prophecy of restoration grows. And it is to that passage that we now turn.

P A R T I V

*The Restoration: Life from the Dead*

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*Chapter 11*

## **The Second Exodus: Declared by Moses from the Beginning**

In the previous three chapters, we have traced the scattering of Israel, the transition of the gospel to the Gentile world, and the grafting of wild branches into the cultivated olive tree. We have seen that Israel's hardening is partial and temporary, that the Gentile church draws its life from Israel's root, and that the entire operation of the present age serves a single purpose: the eventual restoration of all Israel and the fulfilment of every covenant promise. We now turn to that restoration.

It would be natural to begin Part IV with the prophets. Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones, Jeremiah's promise of the new covenant, Zechariah's portrait of the returning Messiah: these are the passages most commonly associated with Israel's future restoration. And we will examine them in the chapters that follow. But we do not begin there. We begin where the Bible itself begins its prophecy of restoration: at Moses.

Before the people of Israel had crossed the Jordan, before they had taken a single city in Canaan, before they had built the temple or crowned a king, Moses stood before the assembled nation and told them what would happen. He told them they would receive the blessing. He told them they would break the covenant. He told them they would be scattered among the nations. And then he told them that God would bring them back. The entire arc of Israel's history, from the conquest of Canaan to the final restoration, was declared

by Moses from the beginning. Deuteronomy 30 is the seed from which every later prophecy of restoration grows.

### **Before They Entered the Land**

The setting of Deuteronomy 30 is essential to understanding its weight. Israel is standing on the eastern bank of the Jordan. The wilderness wandering is nearly over. The generation that refused to enter the land at Kadesh Barnea has perished, just as God swore they would. A new generation has grown up under Moses' teaching, and they are about to cross over into the promise. It is at this precise moment, when the fulfilment of God's covenant appears to be within reach, that Moses delivers a prophecy of breathtaking scope.

He does not merely warn them to obey. He has done that already, at length, throughout the preceding chapters of Deuteronomy. Here, he goes further. He tells them what will happen when they fail to obey. Not if, but when. Moses speaks with the certainty of a man who has lived among these people for forty years, who has seen their stubbornness, who has interceded for them again and again, and who knows by prophetic revelation that the pattern will continue. The blessing will be given. The covenant will be broken. The curses will fall. And then, after all of that, God will act.

This prophetic certainty is critical. Deuteronomy 30 is not a contingency plan. It is not a safety net offered in case things go wrong. It is a declaration of what God has purposed from the beginning. He is declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isaiah 46:10). Moses saw the entire narrative before it unfolded. He saw the exile. He saw the scattering. He saw the regathering. And he declared it to the nation before they had set a single foot in the promised land.

## **The Sequence of Deuteronomy 30**

Let's take a closer look at Deuteronomy 30. The passage opens with a remarkable conjunction of curse and promise. Moses assumes the worst has already happened. He speaks as though the nation has already broken the covenant, already received the curses, and already been driven out among the nations. And from that devastated position, he begins to describe what God will do.

*"And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee,"  
(Deuteronomy 30:1 KJV)*

The structure of this verse is deliberate. Both the blessing and the curse are assumed. The scattering among the nations is assumed. The people will be driven out, just as Moses had warned in the preceding chapters. And there, in exile, among the nations, surrounded by the very curses they brought upon themselves, something will happen. They will call these things to mind. Memory will return. Understanding will begin to dawn. The word of God that was preached to them, that they dismissed and disobeyed, will come back to them.

This calling to mind is significant. It is the first movement of repentance. It is not yet full repentance, but it is the precondition for repentance. The scattered, broken, enslaved people of God will begin to remember what Moses told them. They will remember the covenant. They will remember the blessings that were promised for obedience. They will remember the curses that were promised for disobedience. And they will begin to understand that everything that has happened to them was foretold by God through His servant Moses. This is the beginning of the return.

## **Repentance and Return**

Moses continues with the second step in the sequence. Having remembered, the people will repent.

*"And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;" (Deuteronomy 30:2 KJV)*

The language here is precise. This is not a superficial repentance. It is not a religious observance performed out of habit or cultural identity. It is a return to the LORD with all the heart and with all the soul. Moses specifies that the returning generation will obey God's voice *according to all that I command thee this day*. This means someone must be teaching them. Somebody, in the time of their exile and scattering, must be preaching the Torah to them, explaining the covenant, and showing them what Moses commanded. The repentance that Moses envisions is not a vague spiritual awakening. It is a return to the specific terms of the covenant that Moses delivered, and it requires teachers who understand those terms and can communicate them faithfully.

This is where the first fruits come into view, though Moses does not use that terminology here. The people who are scattered among the nations will not arrive at repentance on their own. They are blind, deaf, and hardhearted, as Isaiah would later describe. They need someone to open the Torah for them, to show them what Moses said, and to connect the curses they are experiencing with the covenant they have broken. The apostle Paul, writing centuries later, would ask the same question: *How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?* (Romans 10:14). The sequence that Moses describes requires preachers. It requires a people who have already come to

faith, who understand the covenant, and who can teach Israel to return to the LORD.

Notice also that Moses says *thou and thy children*. This is a generational repentance. It is not merely individuals here and there who come to faith. It is a national turning, extending across generations, involving parents and their children together. The covenant was made with families, with tribes, with a whole nation. The repentance will be on the same scale.

### **God's Response to Repentance**

Having described the repentance, Moses now describes God's response. And what follows is the gospel in its most concentrated Old Testament form.

*"That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee." (Deuteronomy 30:3 KJV)*

Three actions are described here, and each one is loaded with covenantal significance. First, God will turn (reverse or end) their captivity. The captivity is not accidental. It is not the result of geopolitical forces beyond God's control. God Himself drove them into captivity as a consequence of their covenant violation. And God Himself will end that captivity when repentance comes. The One who scattered will gather. The One who cursed will bless. The One who drove them out will bring them back.

Second, God will have compassion upon them. This is the same tender mercy that moved God to provide the brass serpent in the wilderness when the people were being struck down for their rebellion. They deserved death. They had spoken against God and against Moses. And yet, when Moses interceded, God provided a way. The compassion of God toward Israel is not a reward for good

behaviour. It is a covenant response. It flows from the nature of God Himself, who delights in mercy (Micah 7:18) and who is bound by His own oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Third, God will gather them from all the nations. This is the regathering that every prophet after Moses would amplify and elaborate. Isaiah would speak of it. Jeremiah would speak of it. Ezekiel would dramatize it. Zechariah would describe the military dimensions of it. And Christ Himself would declare it in His Olivet discourse: *And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other* (Matthew 24:31). All of it is rooted here, in Deuteronomy 30, spoken by Moses before the people had even entered the land.

### **From the Uttermost Parts**

Moses then amplifies the scope of the regathering.

*"If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:" (Deuteronomy 30:4 KJV)*

The language is deliberately expansive. There is no corner of the earth so remote that God cannot reach His people there. The scattering will be global, and the gathering will be global. Wherever they are driven, God will find them. Wherever they have been exiled, God will fetch them. The word *fetch* carries the sense of active pursuit. God will not merely open the door and wait for them to wander back. He will go and get them. He will send His agents, His angels, His messengers, to the farthest reaches of the earth, and He will bring them home.

This is not a promise that was fulfilled by the return from Babylon under Ezra and Nehemiah. That return was partial. Only a

fraction of the exiles came back, and only from one direction. Moses speaks of a gathering from the uttermost parts of heaven, a gathering so comprehensive that it encompasses every Israelite, in every nation, across the entire globe. This is the second exodus, and it dwarfs the first. The first exodus brought a single nation out of a single country. The second exodus will bring the scattered remnants of that nation out of every country on earth.

Jeremiah confirms this when he says:

*"Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers." (Jeremiah 16:14-15 KJV)*

The second exodus will be so spectacular, so far reaching, so unmistakably the work of God, that it will eclipse the first exodus in the memory of His people. The first exodus was the defining event of Israel's national identity for more than three thousand years. Yet, the second exodus will surpass it. When God brings His people back from the nations, the deliverance from Egypt will pale by comparison.

### **Restoration to the Land**

Moses continues by specifying the destination of the regathered people.

*"And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers." (Deuteronomy 30:5 KJV)*

The land is specific. It is not any land. It is the land which "thy fathers possessed". It is the land that God swore to Abraham, confirmed to Isaac, and established with Jacob. It is the land whose boundaries were described to Abraham in Genesis 15, extending from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates. The restoration is not spiritual only. It is not a metaphor for the church entering heaven. It is a physical return to a physical land, the same land that the nation was about to enter when Moses spoke these words.

The promise of multiplication is also significant. God will do them good and multiply them above their fathers. This echoes the original Abrahamic promise: *I will make of thee a great nation* (Genesis 12:2). The scattering reduced the nation. The curses decimated them. Persecution, exile, pogroms, and genocide have taken an incalculable toll across the centuries. But God will reverse all of it. He will not merely restore Israel to its former numbers. He will multiply them above their fathers. The restoration will surpass the original blessing. In Christ, all the promises of God are yes, and amen (2 Corinthians 1:20).

### **The Circumcision of the Heart**

Now we come to the climax of the passage, the verse that connects Moses' prophecy directly to the new covenant that Jeremiah would announce centuries later and that Christ would inaugurate through His death and resurrection.

*"And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."  
(Deuteronomy 30:6 KJV)*

This is the most important verse in the passage, and it is arguably one of the most important verses in the entire Torah for understanding the relationship between the old covenant and the new. The old covenant commanded Israel to circumcise their

hearts. Moses himself had told them: *Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked* (Deuteronomy 10:16). That was a command. But the command proved insufficient. Israel could not circumcise their own hearts. The flesh was too strong. Pride was too deeply rooted. The idol of self worship that Ezekiel would describe in chapter 16, where Israel trusted in her own beauty, was embedded so deeply in the national character that no human effort could remove it.

And so, in Deuteronomy 30:6, what was given as a command becomes a promise. God Himself will circumcise their hearts. He will do what they could not do for themselves. He will remove the foreskin of pride and rebellion and stubbornness that has blocked their capacity to love Him with all their heart and soul. This is not a human achievement. This is divine surgery. God will perform the work upon the heart of His people that no amount of religious observance, no system of sacrifices, no human intercessor, and no national reform could accomplish.

This is the new covenant in seed form. When Jeremiah writes, centuries later, *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people* (Jeremiah 31:33), he is not introducing a new concept. He is expanding what Moses declared in Deuteronomy 30:6. When Ezekiel writes, *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh* (Ezekiel 36:26), he is prophesying the same reality. And when Christ tells Nicodemus, *Ye must be born again* (John 3:7), He is describing the end result of the same transformation. The circumcision of the heart, the new heart, the new spirit, the new birth: these are all expressions of the same divine act, and they all trace back to Deuteronomy 30:6.

The result of this circumcision is also stated: *to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.* The purpose is love. Not mere obedience. Not dutiful compliance. Love. The kind of love that the old covenant demanded but could not produce. The kind of love that requires the Holy Spirit working within the human heart. The kind of love that is the fulfilment of the whole law, as Paul would later write: *Love is the fulfilling of the law* (Romans 13:10). When God circumcises the heart, the idol of pride is removed, and in its place comes the capacity to love God without reservation.

And the outcome is life. *That thou mayest live.* This is not merely biological survival. This is the life that Christ spoke of when He told Nicodemus that whoever believes in the Son will not perish but have *everlasting life* (John 3:16). This is the life that is pictured by the tree of life in the New Jerusalem. This is the life that the Sabbath rest foreshadows. This is the life that Moses himself associated with the covenant when he said, *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live* (Deuteronomy 30:19). The circumcision of the heart leads to love, and love leads to life. This is the gospel.

### **Vengeance Upon the Enemies**

Moses does not stop at the restoration of Israel. He continues with a declaration that is often overlooked but is essential to the complete picture of the second exodus.

*"And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee." (Deuteronomy 30:7 KJV)*

The curses that Israel brought upon themselves through covenant violation will be transferred to their enemies. Every nation that persecuted Israel, every empire that enslaved them, every

ideology that sought to destroy them, will receive the very curses that were originally applied to the covenant people. This is not vindictiveness. This is justice. God permitted the nations to be instruments of discipline upon His people, but He did not authorize them to exceed their mandate. He did not authorize them to take pleasure in Israel's suffering. He did not authorize them to attempt the annihilation of the people He had chosen.

The prophet Zechariah makes this explicit: *I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction* (Zechariah 1:15). God was displeased with Israel and used the nations to discipline them. But the nations went beyond discipline. They acted out of hatred, out of greed, out of a desire to destroy. And for that excess, they will answer to God. The curses will be redirected. The persecutors will become the persecuted. The oppressors will be oppressed. And the people of God will be vindicated before the watching world.

This is the element of the gospel that modern theology has largely abandoned. The good news is not only that God saves His people. The good news is also that God judges their enemies. Salvation and judgment are two sides of the same coin. The God who delivers is the God who destroys. The God who gathers is the God who scatters. And the nations that have scattered Israel will themselves be scattered. Behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of God! Moses declared this before Israel entered the land. The prophets confirmed it throughout the centuries. And Christ Himself will execute it at His return.

### **Obedience Restored**

Moses concludes the sequence with a picture of the fully restored covenant relationship.

*"And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day." (Deuteronomy 30:8 KJV)*

This is the outcome of the entire process. Israel returns to full obedience. Not the partial, external, hypocritical obedience that characterized so much of their history under the old covenant, but genuine obedience flowing from a circumcised heart. The commandments that Moses gave at Sinai and in the plains of Moab will finally be obeyed, not because the people fear punishment, but because they love God. The law will be written on their hearts, as Jeremiah would say. The Spirit will cause them to walk in God's statutes, as Ezekiel would promise. The obedience that was always the goal of the covenant will finally be realized.

Notice that Moses says *all his commandments which I command thee this day*. The Torah is not abolished in the restoration. It is fulfilled. The law that Israel could not keep because of the weakness of the flesh will be kept by a people whose hearts have been circumcised by God Himself. This is the resolution of the tension that we traced in earlier chapters: the tension between the Abrahamic promise, which was unconditional and eternal, and the Mosaic covenant, which imposed conditions that Israel could not meet. The resolution is not that God abandons the law. The resolution is that God changes the heart, so that the people can finally do what the law always required.

The apostle Paul captures this precisely when he writes that God sent His Son *that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit* (Romans 8:4). The purpose of Christ's coming was not to destroy the law but to make possible its fulfilment in the lives of His people. And that fulfilment begins with the first fruits, who receive the Spirit now, and extends to the whole house of Israel at the restoration, when the circumcision of the heart is applied to the entire nation.

## **Declaring the End from the Beginning**

The scope of what Moses prophesied in Deuteronomy 30 cannot be overstated. In eleven verses, he laid out the entire trajectory of Israel's future. Blessing, covenant violation, curses, scattering among the nations, remembering, repentance, divine compassion, regathering from all the earth, restoration to the specific land promised to the fathers, multiplication beyond former numbers, circumcision of the heart, transfer of curses to the enemies, and full obedience restored. Every subsequent prophet of Israel would elaborate on one or more of these themes. But none of them invented the themes. They all go back to Moses.

Isaiah's servant songs, Jeremiah's new covenant, Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, Daniel's vision of the kingdom, Hosea's promise that *Lo Ammi* would become *Ammi* again, Joel's outpouring of the Spirit, Amos's restoration of the tabernacle of David, Micah's portrait of God pardoning iniquity and casting sins into the sea, Zechariah's vision of the mourning over the pierced one, and Malachi's promise of the sun of righteousness arising with healing in his wings: all of them are expansions of the seed planted in Deuteronomy 30. Moses is the root. The prophets are the branches. And Christ is the first fruit.

This is why Christ said to the Pharisees: *Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me* (John 5:45-46). Moses wrote of Christ. Not only in the proto-gospel of Genesis 3:15, not only in the Passover lamb, not only in the brass serpent lifted up in the wilderness, but here, in Deuteronomy 30, where he described the circumcision of the heart that only God could perform, the gathering from the nations that only God could accomplish, and the restoration of all things that only God could bring about. If the

Pharisees had believed Moses, they would have recognized in Christ the fulfilment of everything Moses had declared.

### **The Gospel Preached Beforehand**

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Hebrews, makes a statement that is directly relevant to our study of Deuteronomy 30.

*"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." (Hebrews 4:2 KJV)*

Paul is clear: the gospel was preached to ancient Israel. It was not a different gospel. It was not a lesser gospel. It was the same gospel. The same promise. The same land. The same rest. The same covenant. The only difference is that they did not believe it. The word was not mixed with faith. They heard what Moses said about the blessing and the curse, about the scattering and the regathering, about the circumcision of the heart and the restoration to the land, and they did not believe it. They treated God's word as unreliable. They spoke against God and against Moses. And God swore in His wrath: *They shall not enter into my rest* (Hebrews 3:11).

But the promise did not die with that generation. The rest remains. Paul makes this the central argument of Hebrews 3 and 4. The generation that came out of Egypt failed. The generation of David's time was warned again: *Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts* (Psalm 95:7-8). The generation of Paul's time received the same warning. And our generation receives it now. The promise is the same. The gospel is the same. The land is the same. The rest is the same. *And the risk of unbelief is the same.* The only thing that changes is the time and the people.

This is why Deuteronomy 30 matters so profoundly. It is not merely a prophecy about Israel's future. It is the gospel preached

beforehand. It is the good news of God's covenant faithfulness, declared to the nation before they had entered the land, before they had broken the covenant, before they had experienced a single curse. God told them the end from the beginning. He told them they would fail. He told them they would be scattered. And He told them He would bring them back. That is the gospel. It is good news because God is faithful, even when His people are not.

### **The First Fruits and the Second Exodus**

Where do the first fruits fit within the sequence of Deuteronomy 30? The passage describes a national repentance: *thou shalt return unto the LORD thy God*. It describes a national regathering: *the LORD thy God will gather thee from all the nations*. And it describes a national transformation: *the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart*. All of this awaits the return of Christ and the events pictured by the fall holy days, as we outlined in Chapter 8. But the first fruits are already experiencing, in foretaste, what the whole nation will experience at the restoration.

The first fruits have already repented. They have already returned to the LORD with all their heart. They have already received the circumcision of the heart through the Holy Spirit. They are already obeying the voice of the LORD according to all that Moses commanded. They are, in effect, the advance guard of the second exodus. They have come out of spiritual Egypt. They have crossed the wilderness. And they are labouring to enter into the rest that Deuteronomy 30 ultimately promises.

Paul describes this foretaste when he writes that *we which have believed do enter into rest* (Hebrews 4:3). The first fruits are already entering, in a partial and preliminary way, the *katapausis* that God has promised. Every seventh day, in the holiness code, they enter into a divine relationship that foreshadows the eternal *sabbatismos* that remains for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9).

They are tasting, in the present, what the whole nation will experience in the fullness of time. And their role is not merely to enjoy this foretaste. Their role is to teach. They are the ones who will preach the Torah to the scattered Israelites. They are the ones who will explain the covenant. They are the ones through whom Israel will hear the voice of the LORD and return to Him with all their heart.

This is the work that Paul describes when he speaks of provoking Israel to jealousy (Romans 11:11). The first fruits, by their faith, their obedience, and their understanding of the covenant, are meant to show Israel what God intended for them from the beginning. When the scattered remnant sees a people who love God with all their heart, who keep His commandments not out of compulsion but out of love, who understand the promises and believe them without reservation, something will stir. Memory will awaken. The words of Moses will come back to mind. And the sequence of Deuteronomy 30 will begin to unfold.

### **Not a New Plan**

Perhaps the most important thing to understand about Deuteronomy 30 is that it is not a contingency plan. It is not God's reaction to Israel's failure. It is God's plan declared before the failure occurred. The scattering was foreseen. The rebellion was anticipated. The exile was known from the beginning. And the restoration was purposed from the beginning.

This is what separates the God of the Bible from every other deity conceived by the human imagination. A god who reacts, who adapts, who changes course when his plans fail, is a god made in man's image. The God of the Bible declares the end from the beginning. He does not improvise. He does not adjust. He does not revise His strategy. He works all things according to the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11). And the counsel of His will, from the

foundation of the world, has included both the scattering and the gathering, both the curse and the blessing, both the breaking of the covenant and the circumcision of the heart.

This means that replacement theology, the idea that God has abandoned Israel and transferred His promises to the church, is not merely a theological error. It is a denial of God's declared purpose. God did not say, *If Israel fails, I will find another people*. He said, *When Israel fails, I will bring them back*. He did not say, *If they break the covenant, the covenant is void*. He said, *When they break the covenant, I will circumcise their hearts so they can keep it*. The restoration was built into the plan from the beginning. To deny it is to deny the character of God.

And this is why Paul, when he addresses the Roman church, asks with rhetorical force: *Hath God cast away his people? God forbid* (Romans 11:1). Paul does not reason from sentiment. He reasons from Scripture. He reasons from Moses. The same Moses who declared that God would scatter Israel among the nations also declared that God would gather them back. You cannot accept the one and reject the other. If Moses was right about the scattering, he was right about the gathering. If he was right about the curse, he was right about the blessing. If he was right about the rebellion, he was right about the circumcision of the heart. All the promises of God in Christ are yes, and amen.

### **Looking Ahead**

Deuteronomy 30 is the foundation. But the prophets who followed Moses did not merely repeat him. They expanded his vision, adding detail, colour, and specificity to the broad outline that Moses had sketched. In the chapters that follow, we will trace this expanding prophetic vision.

In Chapter 12, we will examine the prophetic promises of regathering in detail, tracing how Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the

other prophets described the ingathering of the remnant from among the nations. In Chapter 13, we will turn to Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones, the most dramatic portrayal of national resurrection in all of Scripture, and see how it connects to the promises we have studied here. And in Chapter 14, we will examine the inevitable return to Zion, the prophetic certainty that God will restore His people to the land He swore to their fathers, and that no power on earth or in heaven can prevent it.

But all of it begins here. At Moses. Before Israel crossed the Jordan. Before they broke the covenant. Before they were scattered. Before the temple was built or destroyed. Before the exile to Babylon. Before the Romans levelled Jerusalem. Before the long centuries of wandering. Before the Holocaust. Before the modern State of Israel. Before any of it, Moses stood on the plains of Moab and declared what God had purposed from the beginning: *The LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations* (Deuteronomy 30:3).

The promise stands. It has never been revoked. It has never been transferred. It has never been spiritualized into something other than what Moses said. And in Christ, the One through whom all the promises of God are fulfilled, it will be accomplished. The second exodus is coming. And it was declared by Moses from the beginning.

## *Chapter 12*

# **The Regathering of the Remnant**

In the previous chapter, we examined Deuteronomy 30 as the seed prophecy of Israel's restoration. Moses declared the entire sequence before the nation had crossed the Jordan: the blessing, the covenant violation, the scattering, the repentance, and the regathering. Every prophet who followed Moses would expand on one or more elements of that sequence. None of them invented the themes. They all traced back to what Moses had declared from the beginning.

This chapter examines the prophetic promises of regathering in detail. We will move through the major and minor prophets, not exhaustively (for the theme is woven throughout the entire prophetic corpus), but sufficiently to demonstrate that the regathering of Israel is not a marginal theme in the Hebrew Bible. It is one of its most persistent and emphatic declarations. Prophet after prophet, century after century, the message is repeated: God will gather His scattered people and bring them home. The promise is unconditional. It is rooted in covenant. And it awaits its ultimate fulfilment in Christ.

## **Isaiah: The Signal to the Nations**

No prophet speaks of the regathering with more frequency or more grandeur than Isaiah. The theme appears in nearly every major section of his book, and it is always presented as the work of God Himself, accomplished by His own power, for His own glory, in fulfilment of His own covenant.

In chapter 11, Isaiah describes the regathering as a second act of divine deliverance, explicitly distinguished from the first exodus out of Egypt.

*"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea." (Isaiah 11:11 KJV)*

The language is precise. This is the *second time*. The first time was the exodus from Egypt under Moses. The second time is still future. And the scope of the second gathering dwarfs the first (*Jeremiah 16:14-15, 23:7-8*). Moses led the people out of one country. The second gathering will bring them from Assyria, Egypt, Cush (Ethiopia), Elam (Persia), Shinar (Babylon), Hamath (Syria), and the islands of the sea. This is a global regathering from every direction: north, south, east, west, and across the oceans. No corner of the earth is excluded.

What follows in Isaiah 11 is equally significant.

*"And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." (Isaiah 11:12-13 KJV)*

Two things demand attention here. First, God sets up an ensign, a signal, a banner, for the nations. The regathering of Israel will not be a private affair. It will be visible to the entire Gentile world. The nations will witness it. They will see God's hand moving in history, gathering a people who were scattered among them, and they will have to reckon with what it means. This corresponds to what we read in Psalm 98: *The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen* (Psalm 98:2). The salvation is for Israel. The display is for the nations.

Second, the ancient division between Ephraim and Judah, between the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, will be healed. The envy and the hostility that fractured the united monarchy under Rehoboam will be permanently resolved. As we traced in Chapter 6, the northern kingdom was formally divorced and scattered by Assyria, while the southern kingdom was disciplined but preserved. Isaiah now prophesies that both will be gathered, both will be reunited, and the old rivalry will be gone forever. This is the same reality that Ezekiel pictures with the two sticks becoming one in the hand of God (Ezekiel 37:19). The division was real. The healing will be just as real.

Isaiah returns to the theme in chapter 27.

*"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel." (Isaiah 27:12 KJV)*

The phrase *one by one* is extraordinary. This is not a mass migration. This is individual, personal attention. God will find each scattered Israelite, wherever they are, and bring them back. The same God who numbers the hairs on a man's head will identify each descendant of the covenant and gather them individually. No one

will be overlooked. No one will be forgotten. The gathering is as specific as the scattering was comprehensive.

And then, in the very next verse:

*"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem." (Isaiah 27:13 KJV)*

The great trumpet. This is the same trumpet that Christ describes in Matthew 24:31: *And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* Isaiah and Christ are describing the same event. The trumpet sounds. The angels go out. The scattered remnant is gathered. And they come to Jerusalem to worship. This is the feast of Trumpets in its ultimate fulfilment, as I outlined in Chapter 8. The return of Christ, the crushing of His enemies, and the gathering of His people are a single coordinated event, announced by the blast of the great trumpet.

Isaiah continues to build this theme throughout his later chapters. In chapter 43, God speaks with a directness that leaves no room for ambiguity.

*"Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;" (Isaiah 43:5-6 KJV)*

Every direction is named. East, west, north, south, the ends of the earth. The commands are issued to the nations themselves: *Give up. Keep not back.* The nations that have held Israel captive, that have absorbed them into their populations, that have persecuted

them and attempted to erase their identity, will be commanded to release them. And they will comply, because the God who commands the nations is the LORD of hosts, and His word does not return void.

The purpose of this gathering is stated in the verse that follows:

*"Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." (Isaiah 43:7 KJV)*

This is not merely national restoration. It is the fulfilment of the purpose for which Israel was created. God formed this people for His glory. The scattering obscured that glory. The exile hid it. The centuries of wandering seemed to contradict it. But the regathering will vindicate it. When God brings His people home, the purpose for which He created them will be fulfilled at last. He will be glorified in Israel, and in no other (Isaiah 49:3).

### **Jeremiah: The Shepherd Who Gathers**

Jeremiah prophesied during the last days of the southern kingdom, in the years leading up to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. He witnessed the very catastrophe that Moses had foretold. He saw the Temple burned, the city levelled, and the people dragged into exile. And yet, even as he wept over the destruction, he prophesied the restoration with equal certainty.

We have already noted Jeremiah 16:14-15, where the prophet declares that the second exodus will eclipse the first in the memory of Israel. But Jeremiah says far more than this. In chapter 23, he describes the regathering in the language of a shepherd retrieving lost sheep.

*"And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase." (Jeremiah 23:3 KJV)*

Notice: *whither I have driven them*. God does not blame the Babylonians for the exile. He does not blame the Assyrians for the scattering. He takes full responsibility. He drove them out. He scattered them. The nations were instruments, but God was the author. And because He is the author of the scattering, He is the author of the gathering. The same hand that drove them out will bring them back. The same shepherd who scattered the flock will gather the flock. This is the consistency of God's character. He does not delegate the restoration to another. He does it Himself.

Jeremiah continues:

*"And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD." (Jeremiah 23:4 KJV)*

This is the promise that connects directly to the role of the first fruits. God will set up shepherds, pastors, teachers, who will feed the regathered people. These shepherds will be pastors after God's own heart, as Jeremiah says elsewhere: *And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding (Jeremiah 3:15)*. The first fruits, those who have been called and trained during the present age, who understand the covenant and believe God's promises, will serve as these shepherds. They will teach the regathered remnant. They will open the Torah. They will explain what Moses declared from the beginning. And the people will fear no more.

In chapter 30, Jeremiah brings the themes of salvation and regathering together in a passage of remarkable power.

*"Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid." (Jeremiah 30:10 KJV)*

Jacob *shall* return. Not *might* return. Not *could* return if conditions are favourable. *Shall* return. The verb is unconditional. The return is certain because the covenant is certain. And when Jacob returns, the result is rest. The *katapausis* that the apostle describes in Hebrews 3 and 4, the divine rest that was promised from the foundation of the world, will finally be realized in the land that God swore to give to the fathers. Jacob shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. This is the sabbatismos that remains for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9).

And then Jeremiah adds the companion truth that always accompanies the promise of restoration:

*"For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished." (Jeremiah 30:11 KJV)*

God's punishment of Israel is measured. It has limits. It has a purpose: correction, not destruction. But God's judgment on the nations that persecuted Israel is full and final. *Though I make a full end of all nations*. The empires that swallowed Israel will themselves be swallowed (*Deuteronomy 30.7*). Assyria is gone. Babylon is gone. Persia is gone. Greece is gone. Rome is gone. The Ottoman Empire is gone. Every beast power that subjugated Jerusalem has been broken. And whatever beast power remains at the end will meet the same fate. God does not preserve the

instruments of discipline once the discipline is complete. The rod is used and then the rod is broken.

Jeremiah 31 is perhaps the most concentrated expression of the regathering promise in all of Scripture. The chapter opens with a declaration of covenant love:

*"The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jeremiah 31:3 KJV)*

The word translated *lovingkindness* is *chesed*, the Hebrew word for covenant love, covenant loyalty, covenant faithfulness. This is the love that is not contingent on the behaviour of the beloved. It is the love that persists through rebellion, through exile, through centuries of disobedience. It is the love that moved God to provide the brass serpent in the wilderness, to send His prophets again and again to a people who would not listen, and ultimately to send His own Son to be lifted up on a cross. The regathering flows from this love. It is not a reward for Israel's faithfulness. It is a demonstration of God's.

Jeremiah continues with one of the most vivid descriptions of the restoration in all of prophetic literature:

*"Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry." (Jeremiah 31:4 KJV)*

The word *adorned* in Hebrew is *adah*, the same root from which we derive the concept of the cosmos as an ordered arrangement, a decoration, a beautification. As we explored in our study of John 3:16, Israel is the *cosmos* of God, the ordered arrangement of twelve tribes that constitutes His adornment, His glory, the breastplate of the High Priest. God says He will *adah* Israel once more. He will

arrange her. He will beautify her. He will restore the decoration that sin and exile had stripped away. The virgin of Israel, despite all that she has endured, will be adorned again. She will go forth in joy. The lamentation will become celebration.

And then Jeremiah makes the geographic promise specific:

*"Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither." (Jeremiah 31:8 KJV)*

A great company. Not a handful of survivors. Not a token representation. A great company, including the blind, the lame, the pregnant, those who would normally be unable to make such a journey. Those that suffered greatly before His return (Matthew 24.19) God will bring them all. The weakest among them will not be left behind. The regathering will be complete and comprehensive, leaving no one who belongs to the covenant outside its scope.

### **Ezekiel: For Mine Own Name's Sake**

Ezekiel prophesied from Babylon, among the exiles of Judah. He saw the destruction of Jerusalem in vision. He knew the depth of Israel's sin. And he was given some of the most detailed prophecies of restoration in the entire Bible. What distinguishes Ezekiel's treatment of the regathering is his emphasis on God's motivation. The regathering is not primarily for Israel's benefit. It is for God's name.

*"Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went." (Ezekiel 36:22 KJV)*

This is a crucial corrective to any theology that views the restoration as a reward for Israel's repentance or faithfulness. God is explicit: *I do not this for your sakes*. Israel deserves nothing. They have profaned God's name among the nations. Their exile has caused the Gentile world to mock the God of Israel, to say that He was unable to protect His people, or worse, that He had abandoned them. And God will not tolerate this. He will vindicate His own name by doing what He promised. He will gather the people, not because they earned it, but because His name is at stake.

*"And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes." (Ezekiel 36:23 KJV)*

The nations will know. The Gentile world, which has mocked, ignored, or persecuted the covenant people for centuries, will witness God acting on behalf of His name. The sanctification of God's name will be visible, public, and undeniable. *When I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes*. God will be glorified in Israel. The cosmos will be restored. The adornment will be put back in place. And the watching world will have to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the LORD.

What follows in Ezekiel 36 is the sequence of restoration that parallels Deuteronomy 30 with additional detail:

*"For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land." (Ezekiel 36:24 KJV)*

The gathering. From among the heathen. Out of all countries. Into their own land. The same land promised to Abraham, confirmed to Isaac, established with Jacob. Their own land. Not a new land. Not a spiritual territory. The land.

*"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." (Ezekiel 36:25-27 KJV)*

This is the circumcision of the heart that Moses prophesied in Deuteronomy 30:6. This is the new covenant that Jeremiah announces in chapter 31. God will cleanse them. God will give them a new heart. God will put His Spirit within them. And the result will be obedience: *ye shall keep my judgments, and do them*. The Torah will finally be obeyed, not through human effort, but through divine transformation. The stony heart that resisted God for centuries will be replaced by a heart of flesh that responds to Him. This is the gospel. This is what Moses declared from the beginning. And every prophet confirms it.

*"And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." (Ezekiel 36:28 KJV)*

The covenant formula. The simplest and most profound statement in the Bible: *Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God*. This is what the whole story has been about, from Genesis to Revelation. This is the relationship that was established with Abraham, codified at Sinai, broken by Israel's rebellion, sustained through the centuries of exile by God's covenant faithfulness, and restored at last through the work of Christ. Every promise converges on this single declaration. In Christ, all the promises of God are yes, and amen (2 Corinthians 1:20).

## **Hosea: From Lo Ammi to Ammi**

Hosea's prophecy is among the most dramatic in Scripture. God commanded His prophet to marry a prostitute so that Israel could see, enacted before their eyes, the nature of God's relationship with His unfaithful bride. Hosea's wife Gomer was a picture of Israel: chosen, loved, lavished with gifts, and yet persistently unfaithful. And the children born from this union were given names that declared God's judgment on the nation.

The third child was named Lo Ammi, meaning *not my people*. The declaration was devastating:

*"Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God." (Hosea 1:9 KJV)*

This is the curse. This is the consequence of covenant violation. The people who were called by God's name, who were His adornment, His cosmos, His glory among the nations, are now formally declared *not my people*. The covenant appears to be dissolved. The relationship appears to be over.

But the very next verse reverses the verdict with breathtaking speed:

*"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." (Hosea 1:10 KJV)*

In the very place where the curse was pronounced, the blessing will be declared. Where they were called *not my people*, they will be called *sons of the living God*. The reversal is total. The curse becomes blessing. The rejection becomes adoption. Death becomes life. This is the gospel in its most compressed form: God declares a

people dead and then raises them to life. He pronounces them rejected and then calls them sons.

Hosea continues:

*"Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel." (Hosea 1:11 KJV)*

Gathered together. One head. Coming up out of the land. This is the regathering, the reunification, and the restoration under one king. The division between Judah and Israel, between north and south, is healed. The one head is Christ. And the day of Jezreel, (Jezreel was a fertile valley. The Hebrew word means *God sows*), is great because what God sowed in scattering He will reap in gathering. The seed that was scattered among the nations will produce a harvest that cannot be measured or numbered. The sand of the sea. The stars of heaven. The promise to Abraham fulfilled at last.

The apostle Paul quotes this very passage in Romans 9 when he explains the mystery of Israel's rejection and restoration:

*"As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." (Romans 9:25-26 KJV)*

Paul is clear: Hosea's prophecy is about Israel. It is about a people who were rejected because of their covenant violation and who will be restored because of God's covenant faithfulness. The Lo Ammi will become Ammi again. The not beloved will become beloved. And the mechanism of this transformation is the same one that Moses described in Deuteronomy 30: repentance, the

circumcision of the heart, and the return to the LORD with all the heart and soul.

### **The Minor Prophets: A Chorus of Witnesses**

The theme of regathering runs through the other minor prophets as well, forming a chorus of testimony that spans centuries and confirms the unchanging purpose of God.

Joel prophesies that God will restore what the locusts have consumed:

*"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you."  
(Joel 2:25 KJV)*

The locusts represent the nations that devoured Israel. God takes responsibility: *my great army which I sent among you*. The devastation was His doing. And the restoration will be His doing as well. The years of loss, the centuries of exile, the generations consumed by persecution, will be restored. God does not merely bring the people back. He restores what was lost during the long absence.

Amos prophesies the restoration in agricultural terms that echo the original promise of the land:

*"And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God."  
(Amos 9:14-15 KJV)*

Two elements stand out. First, the restoration is physical and tangible. They will build cities. They will plant vineyards. They will

eat the fruit of gardens. This is not a spiritual metaphor. It is a promise of concrete, material restoration in a specific land. Second, the permanence: *they shall no more be pulled up out of their land.* The regathering will be final. There will be no third exile. No subsequent scattering. The people will be planted, and they will remain. This is the everlasting possession that God promised to Abraham (*Genesis 17:8*), and it will be realized without interruption or reversal.

Micah adds the dimension of God's personal care for the weak and the damaged:

*"In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever." (Micah 4:6-7 KJV)*

The ones who halt, who limp, who are driven out, who have been afflicted: these are the ones God will gather. The remnant is not composed of the strong and the successful. It is composed of the broken, the scattered, the afflicted. They have suffered the brunt and the culmination of the antisemitic hostility in the end time. And from these broken pieces, God will make a strong nation. From the remnant, He will build a kingdom. And He will reign over them in Mount Zion forever. This is the kingdom that Nebuchadnezzar saw as a stone cut without hands, striking the image and filling the whole earth (*Daniel 2:34-35*). It begins with a remnant of limping, afflicted exiles led by the first fruits, and it becomes an everlasting dominion.

Zephaniah brings the theme to its climax with a promise of joy that answers every lamentation:

*"At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD." (Zephaniah 3:20 KJV)*

God will make Israel a name and a praise among all people of the earth. The nation that was despised, scattered, persecuted, and written off by the theologians of Christendom will be exalted before the watching world. The God who keeps covenant will demonstrate His faithfulness in the sight of all nations. And the captivity will be turned back *before your eyes*. The generation that witnesses the regathering will see it with their own eyes. It will not be a theological abstraction. It will be a visible, historical, undeniable event.

### **Zechariah: The Gathering and the Mourning**

Zechariah prophesied after the return from Babylon, when a remnant had come back to Jerusalem and was rebuilding the Temple. And yet his prophecy looks far beyond the modest restoration of his own day to a future gathering that will be qualitatively different from anything that had preceded it.

*"And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the LORD their God, and will hear them." (Zechariah 10:6 KJV)*

*As though I had not cast them off.* The restoration will be so complete, so thorough, so comprehensive, that the centuries of exile will be as though they never happened. The scattering, the suffering, the loss: all of it will be swallowed up in the restoration. The relationship between God and His people will be as it was intended to be from the beginning, as though the rebellion had never occurred. This is the power of the gospel. This is the depth of

God's covenant love. He does not merely forgive. He restores. He does not merely pardon. He heals. The wound is closed so completely that the scar itself disappears.

Zechariah also provides the most intimate portrait of the moment when restored Israel encounters the Messiah they had rejected:

*"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."  
(Zechariah 12:10 KJV)*

This is the moment of the atonement. The regathered people, now standing in Jerusalem, will look upon Christ and recognize what they have done. They will see the One they pierced. And they will mourn. Not with the mourning of defeat, but with the mourning of repentance. The spirit of grace and of supplications will be poured out upon them, enabling them to see what their hardhearted ancestors could not see, what the Sanhedrin in Nicodemus's day would not see. They will see the crucified Messiah, and they will understand that He was lifted up for them, in the same way that the brass serpent was lifted up in the wilderness. And in seeing, they will be healed. The circumcision of the heart, promised by Moses, will be accomplished at last.

### **One Voice, One Promise**

When we stand back and survey the prophetic witness as a whole, the consistency is overwhelming. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Zechariah: they span centuries, they write from different locations, they address different generations, and yet they all say the same thing. God will scatter

Israel for breaking the covenant. God will preserve Israel through the scattering. God will gather Israel back to the land. God will give them a new heart. God will pour out His Spirit upon them. God will establish His kingdom in Jerusalem. And the nations will witness all of it.

Not one of these prophets suggests that the promises have been transferred to another people. Not one of them hints that the regathering is a metaphor for the church entering heaven. Not one of them indicates that God's covenant with Israel has been replaced by a covenant with the Gentiles. They all, without exception, speak of a physical people returning to a physical land under a divine king, in fulfilment of promises that were made to Abraham and declared by Moses before the nation had entered the land.

All the promises of God in Christ are yes, and amen (2 *Corinthians 1:20*). The regathering is one of those promises. It has been declared by Moses. It has been confirmed by every prophet. It has been guaranteed by the oath of God. And it awaits its fulfilment in the One who said to Jerusalem: *Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord (Matthew 23:39)*.

### **Looking Ahead**

The prophetic promises of regathering are extensive, but one passage stands above all others in its dramatic portrayal of Israel's restoration. In the next chapter, we turn to Ezekiel 37: the vision of the valley of dry bones. Here, the regathering is pictured not merely as a return from exile, but as a resurrection from the dead. Scattered bones, long since dried and forgotten, are reassembled, covered with flesh, and filled with the breath of God. It is the most vivid image of national restoration in all of Scripture, and it speaks directly to the question that has underpinned this study from the beginning: Can Israel's dead bones live? The answer, as we shall see,

is yes. Because the God who promised it is the God who keeps His promises.

## *Chapter 13*

# **The Valley of Dry Bones**

We have traced the regathering promise through Moses and the prophets. We have seen it declared in Deuteronomy 30 before the nation entered the land, confirmed by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and the entire prophetic chorus. In every case, the promise is the same: God will scatter Israel for breaking the covenant, and God will gather them again because the covenant is eternal. The mechanism changes. The scope expands. The detail multiplies. But the core truth never wavers.

In this chapter, we come to the single most dramatic portrayal of Israel's restoration in all of Scripture. Ezekiel 37 does not merely promise a return from exile. It pictures a resurrection from the dead. Bones that have been scattered, dried, and forgotten are reassembled, covered with flesh, and filled with the breath of God. What was dead lives again. What was lost is found. What was divided is made one. If we wish to understand what God intends for the house of Israel, we must understand this chapter. And if we wish to understand it, we must read it in its full context, from the valley floor to the two sticks in the hand of God.

## **The Hand of the LORD**

Ezekiel is a prophet in exile. He lived among the Judean captives in Babylon, by the river Chebar. He had already received devastating visions of the abominations committed in the Temple at Jerusalem. He watched, in prophetic vision, as the glory of the LORD departed from the Temple, pausing at the threshold, moving to the east gate, and finally ascending from the midst of the city (*Ezekiel 10:18-19; 11:22-23*). The glory is gone. The Temple will be destroyed. The city will fall. And the covenant people will be scattered among the nations.

It is to this prophet, in this context of utter desolation, that God gives the vision of the dry bones. The timing is deliberate. Ezekiel had already witnessed the worst. He saw the full extent of Israel's sin and the full weight of God's judgment. And now, having shown him the death, God shows him the life that follows.

*"The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones," (Ezekiel 37:1 KJV)*

The hand of the LORD. This is not Ezekiel's imagination. This is not a dream born of wishful thinking. The sovereign hand of God seizes the prophet and places him precisely where God wants him: in the midst of a valley full of bones. The valley is the setting. The bones are the subject. And God is the author of the entire scene.

## **The Condition of the Bones**

*"And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry." (Ezekiel 37:2 KJV)*

God does not allow Ezekiel to glance at the valley from a distance. He causes him to pass by the bones *round about*, to walk among them, to see them up close, from every angle. And what

Ezekiel sees is devastating. There are very many of them. This is not a handful of skeletons. This is a vast multitude, filling the open valley. And they are *very dry*. Not recently dead. Not freshly buried. These bones have been exposed to the elements for a long time. The marrow is gone. The ligaments are gone. Whatever once held these bones together has long since disappeared. They are scattered, disarticulated, bleached by sun and wind. By every natural measure, they are beyond recovery.

This is the condition of Israel as God sees it. Not as the theologians of Christendom have described it, where Israel has been neatly replaced by the church and the old promises have been spiritualized into irrelevance. God sees a valley full of bones. He sees a people who are dead. He sees the slain. He sees a nation that has been destroyed, scattered, dried, and forgotten by the world. And He is not finished with them.

### **The Question**

*"And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?  
And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest." (Ezekiel  
37:3 KJV)*

This is one of the most important questions in the Bible. God asks Ezekiel: *Can these bones live?* The question is not rhetorical. God is testing the prophet. He is asking Ezekiel to assess, with his own eyes, what he has just seen. A valley full of very dry bones. Very many of them. Can they live?

Ezekiel's answer is the answer of faith. He does not say yes, because by every natural measure, the answer is no. Dead bones do not live. Scattered nations do not reassemble. Peoples who have been absorbed into the empires of the world for centuries do not re-emerge as a distinct nation. Everything that Ezekiel can see tells him it is impossible. But he does not say no, because he knows the God who is asking. And so he says: *O Lord GOD, thou knowest. You*

know what You can do. You know what You have promised. I will not limit You by what I can see.

This is the posture that every believer must adopt when confronted with the promises of God. The natural mind says it is impossible. The promises are too old. The people are too scattered. The sin is too great. The exile has lasted too long. Can these bones live? Everything visible says no. But faith says: *O Lord GOD, thou knowest*. And faith is believing God's word, even when every circumstance contradicts it.

### **The Command to Prophecy**

*"Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD."  
(Ezekiel 37:4-6 KJV)*

God commands Ezekiel to prophesy *upon* the bones. He is to speak the word of the LORD to the dead. The bones cannot hear. They have no ears. They have no capacity to receive a message. And yet God commands the prophet to address them directly: *O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD*. This is the nature of the prophetic word. It does not require a living audience. It creates life where there is none. The word of God is not merely informational. It is generative. It calls things that are not as though they were (*Romans 4:17*). God spoke and the universe came into existence. He speaks now, and the dead will live.

The sequence God describes is precise. First, sinews will be laid upon the bones, reconnecting the skeletal structure. Then flesh will come upon them, restoring the muscle and tissue. Then skin will

cover them, completing the physical form. And finally, breath will enter them, and they shall live. This is not instantaneous. It is a process. There are stages. And each stage must be completed before the next begins. The bones must be reconnected before the flesh can hold. The flesh must be covered before the breath can fill a living body. God is meticulous in His restoration. He does not cut corners. He rebuilds from the foundation up.

### **The Reassembly**

*"So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them." (Ezekiel 37:7-8 KJV)*

Ezekiel obeys. He prophesies as commanded. And the response is immediate and dramatic. A noise. A shaking. An earthquake of reassembly. Bones that had been scattered across the valley begin to move. They find their counterparts. Each bone connects to its matching bone: femur to hip, rib to spine, vertebra to vertebra. The noise must have been deafening, the sight overwhelming. A valley of death becoming a field of bodies.

And then the sinews appear. The ligaments and tendons that bind the skeleton together stretch across the reconnected bones. Then flesh rises over the sinews, filling out the form. Then skin covers everything, completing the exterior. The bodies are whole. They are complete. They look like human beings.

But there is no breath in them.

This detail is critical. The physical reassembly is complete, but the bodies are still dead. They have form but no life. They have structure but no spirit. The restoration of the external is not the

same as the restoration of the internal. A nation can be reconstituted geographically and politically, but without the Spirit of God, it remains dead. The bones can come together, the flesh can cover them, the skin can close around them, and they are still corpses lying in a valley. Physical restoration without spiritual transformation is incomplete restoration. This distinction is essential to understanding the full scope of God's promise to Israel.

### **The Breath**

*"Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." (Ezekiel 37:9-10 KJV)*

Now God commands Ezekiel to prophesy a second time. The first prophecy was to the bones. This prophecy is to the wind. The Hebrew word *ruach* means wind, breath, and spirit simultaneously. Ezekiel is calling upon the Spirit of God to enter these reconstituted bodies. *Come from the four winds*. The Spirit that was scattered to every corner of the earth is summoned back. From the north, south, east, and west, the breath converges on the valley and enters the slain.

And they live. Not merely in the sense of biological function, but in the fullest sense. They stand up upon their feet. They are no longer horizontal, no longer prone, no longer subject to gravity and decay. They stand. And they are not a huddled group of survivors. They are an *exceeding great army*. The Hebrew is emphatic: *chayil gadol me'od me'od*, an army exceedingly, exceedingly great. The repetition of *me'od* intensifies the description beyond ordinary language. This is not a remnant. This is a force. A nation that was

dead has been raised to its feet as a military host of staggering proportions.

This is the circumcision of the heart. This is the new covenant. This is the Spirit being poured out upon the house of Israel. Ezekiel 36:26-27, which we examined in the previous chapter, promised a new heart and a new spirit. Now, in chapter 37, that promise is enacted in vision. The breath enters. The Spirit fills. The dead live. And the living stand as an army, ready to serve the God who raised them.

### **The Identification**

*"Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts."  
(Ezekiel 37:11 KJV)*

God leaves no room for ambiguity. He identifies the bones explicitly: *these bones are the whole house of Israel*. Not the church. Not the Gentile world. Not some spiritual abstraction representing all of redeemed humanity. The whole house of Israel. Every tribe. Every family. Every generation that lived and died under the covenant, whether they belonged to Judah or Ephraim, whether they were carried away by Assyria or Babylon or Rome or the Islamic caliphates. The whole house.

And God reveals their own confession: *Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts*. This is what the dead say. This is the testimony of the scattered and destroyed. They know they are dry. They know their hope is gone. They know they have been cut off. This is not a people in denial. This is a people in despair. And it is precisely to this despair that God speaks His promise.

## The Promise of Resurrection

*"Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD." (Ezekiel 37:12-14 KJV)*

The language shifts here from the metaphor of the valley to the reality that the metaphor represents. God will open graves. He will cause them to come up. He will bring them into the land of Israel. He will put His Spirit in them. And they shall live. The sequence is the same as the vision: physical restoration followed by spiritual transformation, both accomplished by God's initiative, both resulting in life in the promised land.

Three times in this passage God calls them *my people*. These are the bones He claimed. These are the dead He owns. They broke the covenant. They were scattered among the nations. They died without repentance, without the Holy Spirit, without understanding. And yet they are still *my people*. The covenant was never dissolved. The relationship was never terminated. God divorced the northern kingdom (*Jeremiah 3:8*), yes, but as we traced in Chapter 6, He did so within the framework of a covenant that He Himself declared was everlasting. The divorce was a legal action within the covenant, not an exit from it. And now, in the resurrection, the divorced are gathered, the dead are raised, and the covenant is renewed.

The concluding statement is emphatic: *Then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it*. God stakes His own identity on this promise. He has spoken it. He will perform it. The gap between the word and its fulfilment may span millennia, but

the word does not expire. When these bones stand and breathe and live and enter the land, they will know, and the world will know, that the God of Israel keeps His word.

### **The Scope of the Resurrection**

It is important to pause here and consider the staggering scope of what God is describing. The whole house of Israel includes every Israelite who ever lived and died under the covenant that was not included in the first resurrection (*Revelation 20.4*). The ten northern tribes that were scattered by Assyria in 722 BC, absorbed into the nations, and lost to human history. The Judeans who perished in the Babylonian destruction and never saw the return under Cyrus. The Jews who were slaughtered by Rome in 70 AD and 135 AD. The countless generations who lived and died in exile across the centuries, under Islamic rule, under medieval persecution, through pogroms and expulsions, the Holocaust and The Great Tribulation yet ahead (*Matthew 24.21, Daniel 12.1*). Every one of them is represented by the bones in the valley. And every one of them is included in the resurrection.

This corresponds to the second resurrection described in Revelation 20. After the millennium, after the first resurrection of the saints who reigned with Christ for a thousand years, there is a general resurrection. Among those who rise in this second resurrection will be the countless Israelites who lived and died without the Holy Spirit, without understanding, under the curse of hardening that Isaiah 6 describes. They were blinded. Their hearts were fat. Their ears were heavy. They could not repent, because the curse prevented it. And yet they are covenant people. God calls them *my people* even in their graves. The second resurrection is the occasion on which God opens those graves and gives them what they were denied in their lifetimes: the opportunity to see, to hear, to understand, and to respond to the gospel.

This is what distinguishes God's covenant faithfulness from every human concept of justice. The human mind says: they rebelled, they died, it is over. God says: they are my people, I will open their graves, I will put my Spirit in them, and they shall live. The promise extends even to the disobedient dead, because the covenant extends even to the disobedient dead. God does not abandon His people in the grave. He goes into the grave after them.

### **The Two Sticks**

The vision of the dry bones would be remarkable enough on its own. But God does not stop there. In the second half of Ezekiel 37, He gives a companion prophecy that completes the picture. The dry bones showed the resurrection of the dead. The two sticks show the reunification of the divided.

*"The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,  
Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand."  
(Ezekiel 37:15-17 KJV)*

Two sticks. One marked for Judah and the Israelites associated with the southern kingdom: those faithful remnants from all twelve tribes who migrated south when Jeroboam established his idolatry, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 11:13-17 and 2 Chronicles 15:9. The other stick is marked for Joseph (Ephraim), representing the northern kingdom and all the Israelites associated with it: the ten tribes that were scattered by Assyria, absorbed into the nations, and lost to human reckoning.

God commands Ezekiel to join these two sticks into one in his hand. The physical action is prophetic theatre. What Ezekiel does

with sticks of wood, God will do with the divided house of Israel. Two will become one. The fracture that began under Rehoboam, that hardened under Jeroboam, that resulted in the formal divorce of the northern kingdom (Jeremiah 3:8), will be permanently healed.

*"And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes." (Ezekiel 37:18-20 KJV)*

The people ask: What do you mean by this? And God answers through the prophet. He will take the northern tribes, scattered and lost among the nations, and He will join them to Judah. Two sticks become one. Two kingdoms become one kingdom. Two histories of rebellion and exile converge into a single story of restoration. And they will be one *in mine hand*. Not in the hand of a human king. Not through political negotiation or military conquest. In the hand of God. The reunification is a divine act, accomplished by divine power, for divine purposes.

### **One Shepherd, One Fold**

*"And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:" (Ezekiel 37:22 KJV)*

One nation. One king. No more division. This is the ultimate fulfilment of the promise that God made to David, that his throne would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:16). The one king is

Christ, the son of David, who will reign over a united Israel in the land that God swore to give to the fathers. The centuries of division, the rivalry between north and south, the separate histories of apostasy and exile, all of it is over. The two are one, and they will never be divided again. This is the ultimate fulfillment of "at-one-ment".

It is in this context that we must read one of Christ's most misunderstood statements. In John 10, Christ describes Himself as the Good Shepherd. He speaks of His sheep, those who know His voice, whom He knows, and for whom He lays down His life. And then He says this:

*"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." (John 10:16 KJV)*

Traditional Christian interpretation has almost universally understood the *other sheep* as the Gentiles, and the *one fold* as the universal church incorporating both Jew and Gentile. But this interpretation ignores the prophetic context that Christ's audience would have immediately recognized. Christ is speaking to Jews in Jerusalem. He is the shepherd of the house of Judah. His immediate flock, the sheep of *this fold*, are the Jews who hear His voice and follow Him. But He has *other sheep* who are *not of this fold*. These are the scattered northern tribes, the house of Ephraim, the lost sheep of the house of Israel, who were divorced and driven out among the nations centuries before Christ's ministry.

When Christ says, *them also I must bring*, He is describing the regathering of the northern tribes. When He says, *they shall hear my voice*, He is describing the spiritual transformation that Ezekiel prophesied: the breath entering the dry bones, the new heart replacing the stony heart, the ears that were once deaf now hearing the voice of the shepherd. And when He says, *there shall be one fold*,

*and one shepherd*, He is quoting directly from Ezekiel's two sticks prophecy. Two folds become one fold. Two sticks become one stick. Two kingdoms become one kingdom. One shepherd, one king, one Christ, ruling over a reunited Israel.

Consider the verses that immediately precede this statement. Christ says:

*"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." (John 10:14-15 KJV)*

He lays down His life for the sheep. Not for the whole world generically, but for the sheep. The sheep He knows. The sheep who know Him. The sheep of this fold and the other sheep who are not of this fold. These are the two sticks. These are the two houses. Judah and Ephraim. He lays down His life to bring them together, so that there will be one fold and one shepherd, exactly as Ezekiel prophesied.

This is precisely what Jeremiah had described in the language of a shepherd gathering his scattered flock:

*"And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase." (Jeremiah 23:3 KJV)*

The connection between Jeremiah 23:3, Ezekiel 37, and John 10:16 is seamless. Jeremiah speaks of God gathering the remnant of His flock from all countries. Ezekiel shows the mechanism: the dry bones raised, the two sticks joined, the one nation restored under one king. And Christ declares Himself to be the shepherd who will accomplish it. *Them also I must bring*. The word *must* carries the weight of covenant obligation. This is not optional. This is not a

secondary mission. The Good Shepherd *must* bring the other sheep, because the Father has bound Himself by covenant to gather the whole house of Israel, and the Son has come to fulfil all the promises of the Father.

### **The Everlasting Covenant**

Ezekiel 37 concludes with a passage that brings together every major theme of the restoration:

*"Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God." (Ezekiel 37:23 KJV)*

The idolatry that destroyed the nation will be permanently removed. The pride that was the root of every sin, as we traced through Ezekiel 16, will be cleansed. God will save them *out of all their dwellingplaces*. Wherever they sinned, wherever they were scattered, wherever they lived in rebellion and ignorance and spiritual death, God will reach into those places and pull them out. The salvation is comprehensive. It leaves nothing behind.

*"And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them." (Ezekiel 37:24 KJV)*

David will be under Christ. One shepherd. One king. And the result is obedience: *they shall walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them*. The Torah will be kept. Not as an external burden imposed on reluctant subjects, but as the natural expression of a new heart filled with the Spirit of God. This is the new covenant of Jeremiah 31: *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts* (Jeremiah 31:33). What was impossible under the

old covenant, because the heart was stony and the ears were deaf and the eyes were blind, becomes inevitable under the new covenant, because God Himself has performed the transformation.

*"And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever." (Ezekiel 37:25 KJV)*

The land. The specific, physical, geographical land that God gave to Jacob. The same land that Abraham walked through. The same land that Joshua entered. The same land from which the people were expelled when they broke the covenant. They shall dwell therein forever. Their children and their children's children forever. This is not temporary. This is not a thousand-year lease. This is the everlasting possession that God promised to Abraham (*Genesis 17:8*), now realized in its fullest form under the reign of Christ.

*"Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Ezekiel 37:26-27 KJV)*

A covenant of peace. An everlasting covenant. God's sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore. His tabernacle with them. The covenant formula repeated for the final time in the chapter: *I will be their God, and they shall be my people*. This is the destination of the entire biblical narrative (*Revelation 21.3*). Every promise, every prophecy, every act of judgment and mercy, every exile and return, every death and resurrection, has been moving toward this single moment when God dwells permanently among His restored people in the land He promised to the fathers.

And then the final verse, which declares the purpose of it all:

*"And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore." (Ezekiel 37:28 KJV)*

The heathen shall know. The Gentile world, which mocked the God of Israel when His people were scattered, which concluded that He had failed or abandoned them, which invented theologies to explain away His covenant and replace His people, will know. They will know because they will see. God's sanctuary will be in the midst of Israel forevermore, and the nations will witness it, and they will know that the LORD sanctifies Israel. Not the church. Not a spiritual abstraction. Israel. The people He chose. The people He covenanted with. The people He scattered. The people He gathered. The people He raised from the dead. Israel.

### **Can These Bones Live?**

The question that God asked Ezekiel in the valley echoes across the centuries. *Can these bones live?* Every generation has answered in its own way. The Babylonians said no. The Romans said no. The medieval church said no. The theologians of Christendom who developed replacement theology said no: God is finished with Israel; the promises have been transferred; the bones will stay in the valley. The Islamic empires that subjugated Jerusalem for 1,350 years said no. The architects of the Holocaust said no.

And yet the bones will be stirring. The nation that was declared dead will be reconstituted. The language that was dead will be revived. The land that was desolate will be safe and productive. The people who were scattered across the nations will return. The physical restoration that Ezekiel saw in his vision, bone joining to bone, sinew covering sinew, flesh rising over form, will be a reality.

That moment is not yet. But it is promised. It has been declared by Moses from the beginning. It has been confirmed by every prophet. It has been guaranteed by the blood of Christ. And it will be accomplished by the same God who spoke to dry bones in a valley and commanded them to live.

*O Lord GOD, thou knowest.*

### **Looking Ahead**

Ezekiel's vision shows us the destination. But the journey from scattering to gathering, from death to life, from division to unity, passes through a specific mechanism: the return to the land that God promised to the fathers. In the next chapter, we will examine the biblical theology of the land itself. The promise of a specific, physical territory is not incidental to the covenant. It is central. God did not promise Abraham a spiritual homeland or a place in heaven. He promised him a land, bounded by rivers, inhabited by peoples, and destined to be the dwelling place of God among men. Understanding why the land matters is essential to understanding why the regathering matters, and why any theology that spiritualizes the land promise away is, at its root, a denial of the faithfulness of God.

## **The Inevitable Return to Zion**

We have now traced the promise of restoration through Moses, through the prophets, and through the most dramatic vision of national resurrection in all of Scripture. We have seen the scattering declared before it occurred. We have heard the regathering promised by prophet after prophet across the centuries. We have watched the dry bones reassemble, receive flesh, and stand to their feet as an exceeding great army. The question that remains is not whether God will restore Israel. That has been established beyond any reasonable doubt. The question is where.

The answer, in Scripture, is never ambiguous. The restoration is to a specific place. It is to the land that God swore to Abraham, confirmed to Isaac, and established with Jacob. It is to the mountains of Israel, to the city of Jerusalem, to the territory whose boundaries were defined in Genesis 15 and whose inheritance was apportioned among the twelve tribes under Joshua. The land is not incidental to the covenant. It is central. Without the land, the covenant is incomplete. Without the land, the promises are unfulfilled. And without the land, the kingdom of God on earth has no address.

This chapter examines the biblical theology of the land: why it matters, what God promised concerning it, why its spiritualization constitutes a denial of the covenant, and why the return to Zion is not merely probable but inevitable.

### **The Land Promise in the Abrahamic Covenant**

The land promise does not begin with Moses. It begins with Abraham. When God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees, the very first element of the covenant was geographic.

*"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:" (Genesis 12:1 KJV)*

Before God mentioned a great nation, before He spoke of blessing, before He declared that all families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham's seed, He told him to go to a land. The destination preceded the purpose. The place preceded the people. From the very first sentence of the covenant, geography is embedded in the promise. God did not say: I will give you a spiritual inheritance. He did not say: I will bless you wherever you happen to settle. He said: Go to a land that I will show you. The land was chosen before Abraham arrived, just as the people were chosen before they existed.

God then made the land promise explicit in a covenant ratification ceremony of remarkable solemnity.

*"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:" (Genesis 15:18 KJV)*

The boundaries are specific. From the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates. This is a defined territory with measurable

borders. It is not a concept. It is not an ideal. It is real estate. And the manner in which this covenant was ratified is critical. In Genesis 15, Abraham prepared the sacrificial animals and fell into a deep sleep. A smoking furnace and a burning lamp, representing the presence of God, passed between the pieces of the sacrifice. Abraham did not pass between them. Only God did. This means the covenant was unilateral. God bound Himself to fulfil the land promise regardless of Abraham's performance or the performance of his descendants. The land promise rests on God's oath, not on human faithfulness.

God repeated the land promise to Isaac:

*"Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father;" (Genesis 26:3 KJV)*

And to Jacob:

*"And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land." (Genesis 35:12 KJV)*

Three patriarchs. Three confirmations. The same land. The same oath. The same unilateral, unconditional commitment. The land promise is not a secondary element of the Abrahamic covenant. It is one of its three pillars: a great nation, a blessing to all families, and a specific land. Remove any one of these pillars and the covenant collapses. Any theology that spiritualizes the land promise while affirming the other two elements is being selectively unfaithful to the text.

### **The Land in the Mosaic Covenant**

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, the destination was never in question. The entire exodus was oriented toward the land.

*"And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites." (Exodus 3:8 KJV)*

The deliverance from Egypt was not an end in itself. It was the means to an end: bringing the people into the land. Every step of the wilderness journey, every provision of manna and water, every instruction given at Sinai, was oriented toward the moment when Israel would cross the Jordan and take possession of the territory that God had promised to their fathers. The Torah cannot be properly understood apart from the land, because the Torah was designed to govern a people living in that land, worshipping in that land, and serving as God's kingdom in that land.

The Mosaic covenant introduced a conditional element to Israel's experience of the land. Obedience would bring blessing and security in the land. Disobedience would bring curses and, ultimately, expulsion from the land. This is the basis for the exile. When Israel broke the covenant, God drove them out of the land, exactly as Moses had warned. But the conditional element applies to Israel's *residence* in the land during the period of the Mosaic covenant. It does not apply to God's *ownership* of the land or His ultimate *purpose* for it. The land belongs to God. He gave it to Abraham's seed by unilateral oath. Israel's disobedience could (and did) result in temporary removal from the land. But it could not and did not void the underlying promise that the land was given to Abraham's seed forever.

*"The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me." (Leviticus 25:23 KJV)*

The land is mine. God retains ownership. Israel are tenants, not owners. They can be removed for covenant violation. But the landlord does not sell the property. The land remains God's, held in trust for the people to whom He swore to give it. No human transaction, no geopolitical rearrangement, no imperial conquest can alter God's title deed to the land. It is His, and He has designated it for Israel.

### **Zion as the Dwelling Place of God**

Within the broader land promise, Jerusalem occupies a unique and irreplaceable position. God did not merely promise a territory. He chose a city within that territory as the place where His name would dwell.

*"For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." (Psalm 132:13-14 KJV)*

The language is absolute. *For ever. Here will I dwell.* God has chosen Zion. He has desired it. It is His rest, His habitation, His permanent address on earth. This is not a temporary arrangement to be replaced by a spiritual reality. It is a declaration of God's intention for the physical location where He will establish His throne among men. When the apostle Paul writes that God has purposed to bring all things together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth (*Ephesians 1:10*), the earthly component of that purpose has a specific location. It is Zion. It is Jerusalem. It is the place that God has desired for His habitation forever.

The prophets consistently identify Jerusalem as the epicentre of the restored kingdom.

*"At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the*

*name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart."  
(Jeremiah 3:17 KJV)*

Jerusalem will be called the throne of the LORD. Not Rome. Not Constantinople. Not Canterbury. Not any city that Christendom has elevated as its spiritual capital. Jerusalem. The city that God chose. The city that bears His name. The city to which all nations will be gathered. The prophetic vision never relocates the throne of God from Jerusalem to anywhere else. Replacement theology moves the centre of gravity from Jerusalem to the church, from the land to the spiritual realm, from Zion to heaven. The prophets never make this move. They consistently, relentlessly, point back to the same location.

*"And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (Micah 4:2 KJV)*

The law goes forth from Zion. The word of the LORD goes forth from Jerusalem. This is the function of the land in the restored kingdom: it is the teaching centre of the world. It is the place from which God's instruction radiates outward to all nations. The Gentiles will come to Jerusalem to learn. They will go up to the mountain of the LORD. They will walk in His paths. And the source of that instruction will be the same city, the same mountain, the same house of God that the prophets identified centuries before Christ was born.

### **The Oath That Cannot Be Broken**

The certainty of the return to Zion rests not on political developments, not on the decisions of the United Nations, not on

the military capability of any modern state, but on the character of God. God swore an oath. And God cannot lie.

*"For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." (Hebrews 6:13-14 KJV)*

There was no authority higher than God by which He could guarantee His word. So He swore by Himself. His own name, His own character, His own existence, stands behind the promise. If the promise fails, God fails. If the land is not given to Abraham's seed as an everlasting possession, then the oath of God is worthless. And if the oath of God is worthless, then there is no gospel, no salvation, no hope for anyone, Jew or Gentile. The entire structure of biblical faith rests on the reliability of God's word. And the land promise is one of the first and most concrete expressions of that word.

The author of Hebrews (which I believe is the Apostle Paul) explains the purpose of the oath:

*"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:" (Hebrews 6:17-18 KJV)*

Two immutable things: the promise and the oath. Both are unchangeable. God willed to show the *immutability* of His counsel. He wanted there to be no doubt about His plan. He wanted the heirs of the promise, Abraham's seed, to know with absolute certainty that what He said, He will do. The land promise is part of that immutable counsel. It has been confirmed by oath. It is impossible for God to lie about it. Any theology that declares the land promise fulfilled in a spiritual sense, or transferred to the church, or

abolished by the new covenant, is calling God a liar about a matter He confirmed with His own oath. This is not a matter of interpretation. It is a matter of the character of God.

### **The Prophetic Certainty of the Return**

The prophets do not speak of the return to Zion as a possibility. They speak of it as a certainty, in the same terms with which they speak of the rising of the sun or the succession of the seasons.

*"Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." (Jeremiah 31:35-36 KJV)*

The permanence of Israel as a nation is tied to the permanence of the created order. As long as the sun rises, Israel is a nation before God. As long as the moon governs the night, God's purpose for Israel stands. Jeremiah continues:

*"Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD." (Jeremiah 31:37 KJV)*

If heaven can be measured. If the foundations of the earth can be searched out. If the infinite can be quantified and the unfathomable can be plumbed, *then* God will cast off Israel. The condition is impossible. It is designed to be impossible. God is saying, in the most emphatic terms available to human language, that He will never cast off the seed of Israel. Not for anything they have done. Not for any sin they have committed. Not for any rebellion, any idolatry, any breach of covenant. The casting off is categorically excluded by the nature of the created order itself.

And in the verses that follow, Jeremiah describes the rebuilding of Jerusalem in specific geographic terms:

*"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever." (Jeremiah 31:38-40 KJV)*

Specific locations. Specific landmarks. The tower of Hananeel. The gate of the corner. The hill Gareb. The valley of the dead bodies. The brook of Kidron. The horse gate. These are not metaphors. These are identifiable locations in and around Jerusalem. God is describing the physical reconstruction of a physical city, and He declares that it will never be plucked up or thrown down again. This is the permanent, final restoration. The city that has been destroyed and rebuilt multiple times throughout history will be built once more, by the hand of God, and it will stand forever.

### **The Spiritualization of the Land**

The greatest obstacle to understanding the land promise in its biblical context is the long tradition within Christendom of spiritualizing it. From the early church fathers onward, the physical land promise to Abraham has been reinterpreted as a spiritual promise to the church. The land of Canaan becomes heaven. The city of Jerusalem becomes the universal church. The return to Zion becomes the entry of the soul into the presence of God at death. And the physical territory that God swore to give to Abraham's seed is quietly relegated to irrelevance.

This spiritualization did not arise from the text of Scripture. It arose from the Hellenization of Christian theology. The Greek philosophical tradition, rooted in Plato, drew a sharp distinction between the physical and the spiritual, elevating the spiritual as the realm of truth and dismissing the physical as a shadow or illusion. When the early church fathers, most of whom were educated in Greek philosophy, encountered the land promises of the Hebrew Bible, they instinctively translated them into the categories of their philosophical training. The physical land became a type of the heavenly inheritance. The earthly Jerusalem became a shadow of the heavenly Jerusalem. And the God who made specific, geographic, measurable promises to Abraham was reinterpreted as a God who dealt primarily in spiritual abstractions.

The consequences of this spiritualization have been catastrophic. If the land promise is merely spiritual, then Israel has no legitimate claim to the territory that God swore to give them. If Jerusalem is merely a symbol of the church, then the Jewish attachment to the city is sentimental at best and idolatrous at worst. If the return to Zion is merely a metaphor for the soul's journey to God, then the physical regathering of the Jewish people is theologically insignificant. And if all of this is true, then the promises of God are not promises at all. They are allegories. And a God who deals in allegories rather than concrete commitments is a God whose word cannot be trusted. If His word cannot be trusted, there is no good news.

Paul confronts this logic directly. When he writes that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (*Romans 11:29*), he is not speaking of spiritual gifts distributed among believers. He is speaking of the specific gifts that God gave to Israel: the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises (*Romans 9:4-5*). The land is embedded in those promises. The land is part of the calling. And the calling is

irrevocable. God does not change His mind about what He promised to Abraham. He does not redefine the terms after the fact. He does not substitute a spiritual reality for a physical promise. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. They stand as given.

### **The Land and the Kingdom**

The land promise is inseparable from the kingdom promise. The kingdom of God, as the Bible describes it, is not a state of mind or a condition of the heart. It is a political reality. It has a king: Christ, the son of David. It has a capital: Jerusalem. It has a territory: the land promised to Abraham. It has citizens: the restored house of Israel. It has a constitution: the Torah, written on the hearts of the people by the Spirit of God. And it has subjects: the nations of the earth, who will come to Jerusalem to learn the law of the LORD and to worship the King.

*"And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one." (Zechariah 14:9 KJV)*

The LORD shall be king over all the earth. But His throne is in Jerusalem. His governance radiates outward from the land of Israel to the nations. The kingdom of God is not a disembodied spiritual reality hovering above the earth. It is rooted in the soil that God promised to Abraham. It is administered from the city that God chose for His habitation. And it is inhabited by the people whom God formed for His glory.

When Christ's disciples asked Him before His ascension, *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* (*Acts 1:6*), they were not displaying theological ignorance. They were asking a legitimate question rooted in everything the prophets had declared. The kingdom had been taken from Israel. The land had been occupied by Rome. The throne of David was vacant. And the disciples, having just spent forty days being taught by the risen

Christ about the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3), wanted to know when the restoration would happen. Christ did not correct their expectation. He corrected their timing: *It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power (Acts 1:7)*. The restoration of the kingdom to Israel was not denied. The question of when was deferred.

### **The Desolation and the Restoration**

The prophets not only promise the restoration of the land. They describe the land's desolation during the period of Israel's exile, and they promise its transformation when the people return.

*"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God." (Isaiah 35:1-2 KJV)*

The land itself will respond to the return of its rightful inhabitants. The wilderness will bloom. The desert will rejoice. The barren soil that lay fallow during the centuries of exile will produce abundantly when the covenant people return. This is not merely agricultural. It is theological. The land and the people are bound together in the covenant. When the people are removed, the land mourns. When the people return, the land celebrates. The physical geography of the promised land is a participant in the covenant drama, not merely its stage.

*"And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited." (Ezekiel 36:35 KJV)*

The land that God gave to Abraham will become what Eden was: the dwelling place of God among men, where the curse is reversed, where the ground produces freely, where the presence of God fills the earth as the waters cover the sea. The restoration of Israel to the land is not merely a political event. It is a cosmic reversal. It is the beginning of the undoing of the fall. It is the return of Eden, not as a garden east of nowhere, but as a specific territory in the Middle East, centred on Jerusalem, inhabited by the covenant people, governed by the Messiah, and open to the nations.

Ezekiel continues with a statement that connects the land's restoration directly to God's reputation among the nations:

*"Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it." (Ezekiel 36:36 KJV)*

The nations will know. They will see the ruined places rebuilt. They will see the desolate land planted. And they will know that the LORD did it. The restoration of the land is God's testimony to the Gentile world. It is visible evidence of His faithfulness. It is proof that His word does not return void. And it is the vindication of His name, which was profaned among the nations when Israel was scattered and the land lay desolate.

### **No Power Can Prevent It**

The return to Zion is described in Scripture as an event that no force, human or spiritual, can prevent. The nations will resist it. The powers of this world will oppose it. The ideologies that deny Israel's right to exist will marshal every argument and every weapon against it. And they will fail.

*"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou*

*shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD." (Isaiah 54:17 KJV)*

This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD. Not a hope. Not a wish. A heritage. An inheritance guaranteed by the character of God. No weapon formed against Israel will prosper. No argument raised against God's promise will stand. Every tongue that rises in judgment, every theology that denies the land promise, every political movement that seeks to dispossess the covenant people, will be condemned. Not by human power, but by divine verdict.

The Psalmist captures the futility of opposition to God's purpose with devastating clarity:

*"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." (Psalm 2:1-4 KJV)*

The nations rage. The rulers conspire. They resent the bonds of God's covenant. They want to break free from the arrangement that privileges Zion and elevates Israel. And God laughs. Not because He is indifferent to their anger, but because their opposition is futile. His purpose was established before they existed. His oath was sworn before their nations were formed. His Son has been installed on the holy hill of Zion (*Psalm 2:6*), and no coalition of earthly powers can unseat Him.

The return to Zion is inevitable because God has decreed it. It is inevitable because His oath cannot be broken. It is inevitable because His name is at stake. It is inevitable because His covenant is everlasting. And it is inevitable because the same God who

scattered Israel by His own hand will gather them by that same hand, and bring them into the land that He swore to give to their fathers, and plant them so deeply that they will never be uprooted again.

### **The Closing of Part IV**

We have now completed Part IV of this study. We began at Moses, in Deuteronomy 30, where the entire sequence of scattering and restoration was declared before Israel had entered the land. We traced the prophetic promises of regathering through Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and the other prophets, hearing a chorus of witnesses that spans centuries and speaks with one voice. We stood with Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones and watched the whole house of Israel reassemble, receive flesh, and stand to their feet as an exceeding great army. And now, in this chapter, we have established that the destination of the restoration is not a spiritual abstraction but a physical land, a specific city, and a permanent dwelling place for the God of Israel among His people.

The land promise is the anchor of the covenant. It gives the promises of God a geography. It roots the kingdom of God in the soil of this earth. It means that the restoration is not an escape from the physical world into the spiritual, but the transformation of the physical world by the spiritual. God will dwell on this earth, in this land, in this city, among this people. And the nations will come to Jerusalem, to the mountain of the LORD, and they will learn His ways, and they will walk in His paths. Because the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

### **Looking Ahead**

With Part IV now complete, we have established the biblical foundation for Israel's restoration: the second exodus declared by Moses, the prophetic promises of regathering, the resurrection of the dry bones, and the inevitable return to Zion. The question now

turns from the restoration itself to its consequences. What happens when Israel is restored? What does the kingdom look like? And what is the role of the nations within it?

In Part V, we will examine the millennial kingdom as described in Scripture. We will begin with one of the most surprising promises in all of prophetic literature: the restoration of Sodom and Samaria, declared in Ezekiel 16, where God promises to bring back the captivity of peoples whose destruction seemed permanent and whose names became bywords for judgment. If God can restore Sodom, what can He not do? And what does this tell us about the scope of His mercy and the reach of His covenant faithfulness? These are the questions we will take up in Chapter 15.

P A R T V

*The Millennial Kingdom: A Nation for the Nations*

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*Chapter 15*

## **The Restoration of Sodom and Samaria**

In Part IV, we established the prophetic certainty of Israel's restoration: the second exodus declared by Moses, the regathering promised by the prophets, the resurrection of the dry bones, and the inevitable return to Zion. We now turn from the restoration itself to its consequences. What kind of kingdom does the restored Israel inhabit? What does the reign of Christ look like in practice? And how far does the mercy of God extend?

The answers to these questions are more startling than most readers expect. The prophets do not describe a kingdom in which God's mercy is limited to Israel alone, nor do they describe a kingdom in which the Gentile world is simply absorbed into Israel without distinction. They describe something far more textured, far more surprising, and far more consistent with the character of a God who delights in mercy. And the passage that reveals this most dramatically is one that the church has largely ignored: Ezekiel 16.

We touched on Ezekiel 16 in Chapter 6, when we examined the bill of divorce and the idol of pride that led to Israel's downfall. There we saw that God adorned Israel as a bride, beautified her with every ornament, and watched as she trusted in her own beauty and prostituted herself with every passing nation. We saw that God declared Israel worse than Sodom, worse than Samaria, worse than the very nations whose names had become bywords for wickedness. But we left the chapter before reaching its conclusion. Now we

return to Ezekiel 16 to discover what God promises to do, not only for Israel, but for Sodom and Samaria as well.

### **The Indictment**

Ezekiel 16 is the longest single chapter in the book of Ezekiel, and it reads like a legal proceeding. God is the plaintiff. Jerusalem is the defendant. And the charge is covenant infidelity of the most extreme kind. God recounts His entire history with Israel: how He found her as an abandoned infant, exposed in an open field, wallowing in her own blood. How He said to her, *Live (Ezekiel 16:6)*. How He watched her grow. How, when the time of love arrived, He spread His skirt over her and entered into covenant with her. How He washed her, anointed her with oil, clothed her in embroidered work, adorned her with gold and silver and precious stones, and crowned her with beauty.

*"Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD." (Ezekiel 16:13-14 KJV)*

Israel prospered into a kingdom. The kingdom of God on earth. A light to the nations. The cosmos, the ordered arrangement, the adornment of God. Her renown went forth among the Gentiles. The nations saw her beauty and acknowledged that it was perfect, because it was God's beauty placed upon her.

And then came the betrayal.

*"But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy*

*fornications on every one that passed by; his it was."  
(Ezekiel 16:15 KJV)*

Pride. The root of all idolatry. Israel looked at the beauty that God had given her and began to believe it was her own. She trusted in her own beauty. She forgot the source of everything she had. She forgot that she was an abandoned infant whom God chose to love, not because of any merit in her, but because of His sovereign choice and covenant commitment. And once she forgot, she gave herself to every passing nation, every foreign god, every ideology and alliance that offered her attention. The beauty became a harlot. The bride became a prostitute. And God, the faithful husband, watched it all.

### **Worse Than Sodom**

The comparison that God draws in this chapter is devastating. He does not compare Israel to Babylon. He does not compare her to Egypt. He compares her to the two cities whose names had become synonymous with judgment and destruction: Sodom and Samaria.

*"As I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters." (Ezekiel 16:48 KJV)*

Sodom. The city that God destroyed with fire and brimstone from heaven. The city whose wickedness was so complete that not even ten righteous people could be found within it. The city whose name became a byword for depravity across the millennia. God says that Sodom did not do what Jerusalem has done. Jerusalem is worse.

And then God identifies what Sodom's actual sin was, and it is not what most readers expect.

*"Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her*

*and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." (Ezekiel 16:49 KJV)*

Pride. Fulness of bread. Abundance of idleness. Neglect of the poor and needy. The root of Sodom's wickedness was not the sexual depravity for which she is remembered, though that depravity was real. The root was pride. The same idol that infected Israel. The same flaw that caused the beauty to trust in her own beauty. Pride produced self-indulgence. Self-indulgence produced idleness. Idleness produced neglect of those who needed help. And from that soil of pride and indifference grew every other form of wickedness, including the abominations that brought fire from heaven.

The parallel is deliberate. Sodom's root sin was pride. Israel's root sin was pride. But Israel had far more reason to be humble, because Israel had been given far more. Israel had the covenant. Israel had the Torah. Israel had the prophets. Israel had the temple. Israel had the direct revelation of God's character and will. Sodom had none of these things. And yet Israel, with all her advantages, fell into the same pit of pride and surpassed Sodom in wickedness. The greater the privilege, the greater the accountability. The more that is given, the more that is required.

Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, occupies the middle position in Ezekiel's comparison. Samaria sinned grievously, leading the northern tribes into the idolatry of Jeroboam and the worship of Baal. But even Samaria, God declares, did not commit half the sins that Jerusalem committed (*Ezekiel 16:51*). Jerusalem justified her sisters. By being worse than both of them, Jerusalem made Sodom and Samaria look righteous by comparison.

*"Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou:*

*yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters." (Ezekiel 16:52 KJV)*

The logic is devastating. Jerusalem looked down on Sodom. Jerusalem considered herself superior to Samaria. Jerusalem's pride led her to despise the very nations that God judged. And God says: You have no standing to judge them. You are worse. Your pride, the very pride that makes you look down on them, is the proof that you are worse. They are more righteous than you.

### **The Turning Point**

Now we come to the passage that transforms our understanding of God's mercy. Having established that Jerusalem is worse than Sodom and Samaria, having pronounced judgment for covenant violation, God makes a promise that no one could have anticipated.

*"When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them:" (Ezekiel 16:53 KJV)*

Read that again carefully. God says He will bring again the captivity of Sodom and her daughters. Sodom. The city that was obliterated by fire from heaven. The city whose inhabitants perished in a single act of divine judgment. The city that has not existed as a populated place for thousands of years. God says He will bring again their captivity.

And He will bring again (i.e., end) the captivity of Samaria and her daughters. Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, whose people were scattered by Assyria in 722 BC and absorbed into the nations, lost to human reckoning for nearly three millennia. God says He will bring again their captivity as well.

And the restoration of Sodom and Samaria will precede, or accompany, the restoration of Jerusalem. God links them together.

The captivity of Jerusalem will be turned in the midst of them. The three are bound together in a single act of divine restoration.

The implications of this promise are staggering. If God can restore Sodom, what limits can we place on His mercy? If the people of Sodom, who perished under divine judgment without the covenant, without the Torah, without a single prophet to warn them of what was coming (apart from the brief visit of angels on the eve of destruction), if these people are included in God's restorative plan, then the scope of God's mercy is far wider than any theology of traditional Christianity.

### **That Thou Mayest Bear Thine Own Shame**

God explains the purpose behind this shocking promise. The restoration of Sodom and Samaria is not merely an act of mercy toward those cities. It is also an act of humiliation toward Jerusalem.

*"That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them." (Ezekiel 16:54 KJV)*

Jerusalem must bear her own shame. The pride that caused her to look down on Sodom and Samaria must be confronted. The arrogance that made her believe she was better than the nations must be broken. And the mechanism of this breaking is the restoration of the very peoples she despised. When Jerusalem sees Sodom and Samaria restored, she will be confounded. She will realize that her pride was baseless. She will understand that the nations she condemned were, by God's own assessment, less guilty than she was. And that realization will be a comfort to Sodom and Samaria, because it will mean that their elder sister, the one who looked down on them, has finally been humbled.

This is the divine pedagogy of shame. God uses the restoration of Sodom and Samaria to teach Jerusalem something she could not learn any other way: that pride is the root of her ruin, and that the God she claims to worship is a God of mercy who extends grace even to those she considered beyond redemption. If Jerusalem is to be the light of the world, if she is to be the teaching centre of the kingdom, she must first learn this lesson. The beauty must have her pride surgically removed before she can serve the purpose for which she was adorned.

### **The Former Estate**

God then describes the scope of the restoration.

*"When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate." (Ezekiel 16:55 KJV)*

Each city, each people, returns to her former estate. The Hebrew word is *qadmah*, meaning the original or former state, the condition that existed before the judgment fell. For Sodom, this means a return to the condition she enjoyed before fire consumed her. For Samaria, this means a return to the condition she enjoyed before Assyria carried her away. For Jerusalem, this means a return to the condition she enjoyed before the covenant curses fell upon her. The restoration is comprehensive. It does not merely improve their condition. It returns them to the original state, as though the judgment had never occurred.

But how? The people of Sodom are dead. They perished in a catastrophe of fire and brimstone. They did not survive. They were not scattered among the nations like Israel. They were destroyed. How does God "bring again" the captivity of a people whose captivity is death itself?

The mechanism of this restoration is resurrection. Ezekiel 37 has already shown us that God raises the dead. The dry bones of the whole house of Israel are reassembled, given flesh, and filled with breath. If God raises Israel from the grave, He can raise the people of Sodom from the grave. And the prophetic timeline reveals where this occurs.

At the end of the millennium, there is a general resurrection. This is the second resurrection, distinct from the first resurrection of the saints described in Revelation 20:6. In this resurrection, the vast multitudes who lived and died without the covenant, without the Torah, without the Holy Spirit, are raised to physical life. They are not raised to immediate judgment. They are raised to live out their lives under the reign of Christ, in the restored kingdom, with access to the truth they never had the chance to hear. Isaiah describes this period in vivid terms: the child shall die an hundred years old, and the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed (*Isaiah 65:20*). There is life. There is growth. There is opportunity to learn, to repent, to respond to the God whose name they never knew. The people of Sodom, who sinned out of pride and ignorance rather than defiance of revealed truth, will see the kingdom established. They will see Jerusalem restored. They will see the covenant fulfilled. And they will have the opportunity to respond.

This is not universalism. Not everyone will respond. After this period of life and opportunity, there is a final resurrection to judgment. Daniel describes it plainly: many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (*Daniel 12:2, John 5:28-29*). This third and final resurrection is not an opportunity. It is a verdict. Everything has been done. Every life has been lived. Every chance has been given. The books are opened, and judgment is rendered according to what has been done. Those who responded

to the truth are granted everlasting life. Those who refused it, even after living in the kingdom and seeing the glory of God with their own eyes, face the second death. There is genuine consequence. There is finality. God's mercy is vast, but it is not without boundary. His patience is long, but it does not extend forever.

The God of Ezekiel 16 is a God who promises to restore Sodom. A God who brings again the captivity of peoples whose destruction seemed permanent. A God whose mercy is wider than the simplistic binary that much of traditional Christianity has taught, where every person who died without confessing Christ is consigned to eternal torment regardless of circumstance. But He is also a God whose justice is never compromised. The general resurrection gives Sodom the life that was cut short. The final judgment holds every soul accountable for what they did with that life. Both mercy and justice are satisfied. Both the restoration of Ezekiel 16 and the judgment of Daniel 12 are honoured. And in Christ, all the promises of God are yes, and amen.

### **The Root and Its Fruit**

It is essential to understand why Sodom and Samaria are included in this promise. The answer is embedded in the structure of Ezekiel 16 itself. The entire chapter is about pride and its consequences. Pride is the root idol. It is the fundamental flaw that corrupted Israel, that corrupted Sodom, that corrupted Samaria, and that corrupts all of humanity. It is the idol that Satan injected into the human race, because it is the idol that defines Satan himself. Every other sin is a branch that grows from this root.

Sodom's pride produced indifference to the poor, abundance of idleness, and ultimately the abominations that brought divine judgment. Samaria's pride produced the idolatry of Jeroboam, the worship of Baal, and the rejection of the Levitical priesthood. Jerusalem's pride produced all of the above and worse, because

Jerusalem had the covenant and squandered it. The root is the same in all three cases. The fruit differs in degree but not in kind.

If the root is the same, then the cure must address the root. And the cure that God promises in Ezekiel 16 is not punishment alone. Punishment addresses behaviour. It restrains the fruit. But it does not remove the root. The root of pride can only be removed by the circumcision of the heart, the divine surgery that Moses prophesied in Deuteronomy 30:6. The new heart and the new spirit that Ezekiel described in chapter 36. The breath of God entering the dead bodies in chapter 37. This is the cure. And if it works for Israel, whose pride was worse than Sodom's, then it can work for Sodom as well. The scope of the cure is as wide as the scope of the disease.

### **The Covenant Remembered**

Having promised to restore Sodom and Samaria alongside Jerusalem, God now addresses the covenant directly. And what He says here is the theological foundation of the entire chapter.

*"For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant." (Ezekiel 16:59 KJV)*

God acknowledges that Jerusalem has despised the oath. She has broken the covenant. She has treated the most sacred commitment in the universe as though it were nothing. And God says He will deal with her accordingly. The curses of the covenant will be applied. The consequences of the breach will be executed. God is a God of law and justice. He does not overlook sin. He does not pretend that covenant violation is acceptable. The punishment is real. The exile is real. The suffering is real.

And then comes the word that changes everything.

*"Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant." (Ezekiel 16:60 KJV)*

*Nevertheless.* This single word carries the weight of the entire gospel. God will punish the violation. He will execute the curses. He will deal with Jerusalem as she has done. *Nevertheless.* He will remember His covenant. The covenant He made in the days of her youth, when He found her abandoned in the field and said, *Live.* The covenant He confirmed with an oath. The covenant that is everlasting, not because of Israel's faithfulness, but because of God's. The punishment is real. But the covenant is more real. The curses are severe. But the promise is more enduring. The judgment falls. *Nevertheless.*

In Christ, all the promises of God are yes, and amen. The crucifixion is the mechanism by which the *nevertheless* of Ezekiel 16:60 becomes operative. Christ took the curses of the covenant upon Himself. He bore the punishment that Jerusalem deserved. He was lifted up as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, as the visible symbol of the curse that the people had brought upon themselves. And by looking upon Him, by acknowledging the sin and the curse, Israel can be saved. Not because the punishment was waived. Because the punishment was absorbed. The judgment fell, but it fell on Christ, The Holy One of Israel. And *nevertheless*, God remembers His covenant.

### **The Sisters Received**

The next verse reveals what the everlasting covenant will look like in practice.

*"Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant." (Ezekiel 16:61 KJV)*

Jerusalem will receive her sisters. Sodom and Samaria, the peoples she despised, the nations she considered beneath her, will be given to her as daughters. This is adoption into the family. This is inclusion in the household. The restored Jerusalem, humbled of her pride, purged of her arrogance, will receive the very peoples she once condemned, and they will become part of her household.

But notice the critical qualifier: *not by thy covenant*. The relationship that Sodom and Samaria have with God will not be the same covenant relationship that Israel has. They are received as daughters, not as the bride. They are included in the household, not seated at the head of the table. There is a distinction. God's covenant is with Israel. The nations are blessed through Israel. They participate in the blessings of the covenant. They are given to Jerusalem as daughters. But the covenant itself, the oath sworn to Abraham, the binding commitment that God made with a specific people, remains specific to that people.

This is consistent with everything we have seen throughout this study. The Gentiles are grafted into the olive tree (for a limited time period - *Romans 11.25*), but the root is Abrahamic. The strangers are welcomed into the household, but the household belongs to Israel. The nations come to Jerusalem to learn, but the law goes forth from Zion. There is one covenant people, and there is everyone else. Everyone else can be blessed, saved, included, welcomed, adopted as daughters. But the covenant is with Israel. And the distinction is maintained, not out of favouritism, but because the structure of God's plan requires it. Israel is the vehicle. The nations are the beneficiaries. Remove the vehicle and there is no benefit.

### **The Established Covenant**

The chapter reaches its climax with a declaration that gathers everything together.

*"And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD." (Ezekiel 16:62-63 KJV)*

The everlasting covenant is established. Jerusalem knows that He is the LORD. The pride that caused her to open her mouth in judgment against others, to elevate herself above Sodom and Samaria, to boast in her own beauty, is silenced. She will never open her mouth again because of her shame. The idol has been removed. The beauty has been refined. The pride that was the root of every sin has been cut out by the divine surgeon. And God is pacified toward her for all that she has done.

This word *pacified* is significant. It carries the sense of atonement, of propitiation, of wrath satisfied. God's anger toward Jerusalem for her covenant violation is not simply forgotten. It is satisfied. The demands of justice have been met. The punishment has been executed, not ultimately upon Jerusalem, but upon the One who stood in her place. Christ is the propitiation. Christ is the satisfaction of divine wrath. Christ is the reason God can be pacified toward a people who despised the oath and broke the covenant. And because God is pacified, the everlasting covenant can be established. Because justice has been served, mercy can flow without limit.

### **What This Means for the Millennial Kingdom**

The promise of Ezekiel 16 shapes our understanding of the millennial kingdom in several critical ways. But we must read the text carefully, because it draws a distinction that is easy to miss.

Throughout the chapter, God calls Sodom and Samaria Jerusalem's sisters. But this is not a covenant category. It is a shame

category. God groups them together because all three share the same root problem: pride. Jerusalem is no better than Sodom. Jerusalem is no better than Samaria. They are sisters in sin, sisters in abomination, sisters in the pride that corrupted them all. The sister language functions to humiliate Jerusalem, to strip her of the arrogance that made her believe she was superior to the nations she despised.

But when the restoration comes, the language changes. God says He will give Sodom and Samaria to Jerusalem "for daughters" (Ezekiel 16:61). The relationship shifts. They were sisters in shame. They become daughters in restoration. And the daughter language carries a specific implication: Jerusalem restored becomes responsible for them. She leads them. She teaches them. She is the mother city, the centre of the kingdom, the seat of God's throne on earth. They are placed under her care and instruction. The daughter relationship means that Jerusalem bears spiritual oversight toward these peoples in the restored order. This is consistent with everything the prophets declare about the millennial kingdom: that the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Micah 4:2), and that the nations will come to Jerusalem to learn how to worship the God of Israel.

The critical qualifier is the phrase "not by thy covenant." The everlasting covenant is established with Jerusalem (Ezekiel 16:60). The daughters are received, but not on the basis of that covenant. This is the only explicit distinction the text draws, and it is decisive.

For Samaria, this distinction requires careful handling, because Samaria is not a foreign nation. Samaria is the northern kingdom. Samaria is the house of Israel. And the new covenant, as Jeremiah declares, is made explicitly with both houses: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31). Samaria is named in the new covenant by

definition. Ezekiel 16 does not need to spell this out, because Ezekiel 37 and Jeremiah 31 do. What Ezekiel 16 does is strip Judah of any right to claim that Samaria's restoration depends on Judah's merit or Judah's covenant standing. It does not. Samaria enters the new covenant because God made that covenant for both houses, not because Jerusalem extended an invitation. The phrase "not by thy covenant" means: this is not your doing, Jerusalem. You have no leverage here. God brings Ephraim back on His own terms, by His own initiative, grounded in His own faithfulness. Judah's pride, which led her to look down on the northern kingdom and consider herself the sole heir of the covenant, is precisely the idol that God is removing.

For Sodom, the distinction is more fundamental. Sodom was never in any covenant. She had no Torah, no temple, no priesthood, no prophets. She lived and died outside the framework of God's relationship with Israel. She is not named in the new covenant of Jeremiah 31. She is given to Jerusalem as a daughter. She comes under Jerusalem's care. She benefits from the kingdom that God establishes. But her relationship to God is mediated through Jerusalem, through the kingdom of priests that God raises up to serve the nations. This is not covenant partnership. This is the blessing that flows outward from the covenant to the nations, the fulfilment of the original promise to Abraham: in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed (Genesis 22:18). Sodom is one of those families. Her destruction seemed permanent. Her judgment seemed final. And yet God promises to bring again her captivity and place her under the care of the restored Jerusalem. This is the reach of God's mercy. It extends beyond the covenant boundary, to peoples whose hope seemed extinguished, through the vehicle that God established from the beginning.

The kingdom is therefore not a flattened equality in which all distinctions are erased. It is an ordered arrangement, a cosmos in

the truest sense of the word. At the centre is Christ, reigning from Jerusalem. Around Him are the first fruits, the resurrected saints who serve as kings and priests. Then there is the restored house of Israel: Judah and Ephraim reunited under the new covenant, the nation whose hearts have been circumcised by God Himself, the beauty refined and purged of the idol of pride. And beyond Israel are the nations, the daughters, including peoples like the Sodomites who are raised in the general resurrection to live out their lives under Christ's reign. They are blessed through Israel. They come to Jerusalem to learn. They participate in the worship of God. Jerusalem leads them, teaches them, bears responsibility for them. But the covenant is with Israel, and the structure of the kingdom preserves that distinction.

This distinction persists throughout the millennium and is confirmed by its conclusion. When the thousand years are ended and Satan is released, the revolt he stirs is among the nations, not among Israel. He goes out to deceive the Goyim in the four quarters of the earth (Revelation 20:8). Israel dwells with God in Jerusalem. The nations inhabit the earth. And the fact that the nations can be stirred to rebellion after a thousand years of Christ's reign demonstrates that they remain in a fundamentally different position from the covenant people whose hearts have been circumcised. The daughters have been blessed, taught, and cared for by Jerusalem. But they have not undergone the transformation that the covenant people have undergone. The distinction that Ezekiel 16 establishes between the covenant and the non-covenant daughters is not a temporary arrangement. It endures to the end of the age and beyond.

The result is a kingdom characterized not by the imposition of power but by the removal of pride. God does not establish His kingdom by overwhelming the nations with force alone. He establishes it by humbling Jerusalem, by reuniting Judah and

Ephraim under the new covenant, by restoring peoples whose destruction seemed permanent, and by teaching everyone involved that pride is the root of all evil and that mercy is the root of all restoration. The kingdom is a kingdom of the circumcised heart. It is a kingdom in which the idol has been extracted from the centre of human nature, so that love can take its place. And that extraction begins with Israel, extends to the nations, and produces a world in which the knowledge of the LORD covers the earth as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

### **The Lesson for the Church**

There is a direct application of Ezekiel 16 to the church in the present age, and it is not a comfortable one. If Jerusalem was condemned for looking down on Sodom and Samaria, what shall be said of a church that looks down on Jerusalem?

The pattern is identical. Jerusalem received the covenant and became proud. She looked at the nations and considered herself superior. She forgot that everything she had was a gift from God, and she began to trust in her own beauty. The church, grafted into the olive tree by grace, has followed the same path. She received the gospel and became proud. She looked at Israel and considered herself the replacement. She forgot that everything she had was drawn from Israel's root, and she began to trust in her own theology, her own traditions, her own institutions. The idol of pride that corrupted Jerusalem has corrupted the church.

Paul warned against this in the most explicit terms. *Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee* (Romans 11:20-21). The natural branches were broken off because of unbelief. The wild branches stand by faith. But faith is not a permanent possession that cannot be lost. It must be maintained. It must be guarded. It must be exercised in humility, not in arrogance. And any branch,

natural or wild, that becomes highminded and boasts against the other branches is in danger of being cut off.

If the church has despised Israel the way Jerusalem despised Sodom, then the church stands under the same kind of rebuke. The beauty of the church, such as it is, was not the church's own doing. It was borrowed from the root. And if the church forgets the root, if it looks down on the natural branches, if it constructs a theology that writes Israel out of her own story and claims the promises for itself alone, then the church is doing precisely what Jerusalem did. She is trusting in her own beauty. And the God who judged Jerusalem for that sin will not overlook it in the church.

### **Looking Ahead**

Ezekiel 16 reveals a God whose mercy is wider than His judgment, whose restoration extends to peoples whose destruction seemed permanent, and whose ultimate purpose is not merely the salvation of one nation but the blessing of the entire earth through that nation. The restoration of Sodom and Samaria is the proof that God's plan has always been larger than Israel alone, even though Israel has always been at its centre.

In Chapter 16, we will examine the role of the Gentiles within the millennial kingdom in greater detail. The prophets describe a world in which strangers receive an inheritance in the land alongside the tribes of Israel, a provision that would have been unthinkable under the old covenant. This is not the abolition of distinctions. It is the extension of blessings. The strangers are included, not as replacements, but as participants in a covenant that was always intended to bless all the families of the earth. The question is: on what terms? And the answer, as always, begins at Moses.

## The Strangers' Inheritance

In the previous chapter, we examined the restoration of Sodom and Samaria, and we saw that God's mercy in the millennium extends even to those who perished without knowledge. The general resurrection brings them back to life, not for immediate judgment, but for an opportunity to live under Christ's righteous rule and to learn what they never had the chance to learn. That is the depth of God's mercy. But a question naturally follows. If the millennium is the period in which God restores Israel, establishes His kingdom in Jerusalem, and fulfils every covenant promise to the house of Israel, what place do the Gentiles have in this kingdom? Are they merely spectators? Are they shut out entirely? Or is there provision for them?

The answer is found in one of the most remarkable passages in the book of Ezekiel, tucked away in the final chapters of his prophecy, in the midst of his detailed vision of the millennial land division. And it tells us something extraordinary: the strangers, the Gentiles *who dwell among Israel*, will be given an inheritance in the land alongside the twelve tribes. These Gentiles are not second-class residents. They are not servants or outsiders. They will be treated as though they were born among the children of Israel.

This is breathtaking. And it must be understood carefully, because it does not contradict anything we have established about the priority of Israel. It confirms it. These Gentiles do not receive an independent inheritance. They receive their inheritance *through* Israel, *within* the tribal structure of Israel, *under* the governance of Israel. The channel remains the channel. The covenant remains the covenant. But the blessing flows outward, exactly as God promised Abraham: in your seed, all the families of the earth will be blessed.

### **The Land Division in Ezekiel**

To understand the significance of the strangers' inheritance, we must first understand what Ezekiel is describing in chapters 45 through 48. These chapters contain a detailed blueprint for the division of the promised land among the twelve tribes of Israel in the messianic age. This is not a symbolic vision. It is a territorial allocation, with specific boundaries, measurements, and assignments.

Each tribe receives a horizontal strip of land running from east to west across the territory. There is a sacred district in the centre, reserved for the temple, the priests, the Levites, and the prince. The city of Jerusalem sits at the heart of this arrangement. Everything revolves around the presence of God in the temple, and the entire land is organized around that central reality.

This is the fulfilment of promises that stretch all the way back to Abraham. God swore to give this land to Abraham's descendants. He reiterated the promise to Isaac, to Jacob, and through Moses to the entire nation. The prophets spoke of it repeatedly. And here in Ezekiel, at the end of his prophecy, God provides the precise details of how it will be accomplished. Every tribe has a named portion. Every boundary is defined. The promise is not vague. It is not spiritualized. It is land, measured and allocated, tribe by tribe.

And it is in this context, in the midst of this very specific, very Israelite land division, that God introduces a provision for the stranger.

### **The Inheritance of the Stranger**

*"So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord GOD." (Ezekiel 47:21-23 KJV)*

Let us consider what God is saying here. The land is being divided among the twelve tribes. This is the covenant inheritance, the land promised to the fathers, now being allocated in the messianic kingdom under the rule of Christ. And God says: the strangers *who sojourn among you*, who have settled among you and have raised families among you, they shall receive an inheritance too.

Not their own separate territory. Not a Gentile district outside the borders. They receive their portion *within* the tribal allotments. Whatever tribe the stranger lives among, that is the tribe through which he receives his inheritance. He is grafted into the tribal structure itself.

And then this extraordinary statement: *they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel*. In other words, they are to be treated as native-born Israelites. Not tolerated. Not merely permitted to exist. They, like Rahab and other faithful Gentiles, have accepted the God of Israel and they are to have the

same standing, the same rights, the same access to the inheritance as those who are Israelites by birth.

This is grace. This is the outward flow of the covenant blessing. God chose Israel as the vehicle through which all families of the earth would be blessed, and here, in the millennial kingdom, we see the mechanism. The Gentiles who dwell among Israel, who submit to the God of Israel, who live under the Torah of Israel, who worship at the temple in Jerusalem, these Gentiles receive a share in the very inheritance that God swore to Abraham. They become participants in the covenant blessing, not by replacing Israel, but by being absorbed into Israel's structure.

### **Not a New Concept**

This provision in Ezekiel is not an innovation. It is the fulfilment of a principle that was established in the Torah from the very beginning. God always made provision for the stranger who wished to worship Him and live among His people. The Torah is full of instructions regarding the treatment of strangers.

*"One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you." (Exodus 12:49 KJV)*

When God gave the Passover instructions, He made it clear: the stranger who wished to participate could do so, provided he was circumcised and submitted to the same requirements as a native Israelite. There was one law for the homeborn and one law for the stranger. Not two systems. Not a separate track. One law. One standard. One God.

*"And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 19:33-34 KJV)*

Love him as yourself. This is not mere tolerance. This is the command to extend to the stranger the same love, the same dignity, the same protection that God extends to His own people. And God grounds this command in Israel's own experience: you were strangers in Egypt. You know what it is to be outsiders. You know what it is to be oppressed in a foreign land. Therefore, love the stranger.

The provision in Ezekiel 47 is the eschatological fulfilment of this Torah principle. What was commanded in the wilderness is now realized in the kingdom. The strangers who come to live among Israel in the millennium will not be treated as foreigners. They will be given land. They will have inheritance. They will be as native-born Israelites.

### **Ruth: The Pattern in Miniature**

Perhaps the most beautiful illustration of this principle in all of Scripture is the story of Ruth. Ruth was a Moabitess. She was a Gentile, from a nation that was specifically excluded from the congregation of the Lord (*Deuteronomy 23:3*). By every legal and ethnic standard, she had no claim on Israel's God, Israel's land, or Israel's inheritance.

And yet, what does she say to Naomi?

*"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:"* (Ruth 1:16 KJV)

This is the posture of the stranger who receives the inheritance. Ruth does not demand her own terms. She does not insist on maintaining her Moabite identity while accessing Israel's blessings. She abandons Moab entirely. Your people shall be my people. Your

God, my God. She submits herself completely to Israel's God and Israel's people.

And what happens? She is not merely tolerated. She marries Boaz, a man of great standing in Judah. She receives an inheritance in the land. She bears a son, Obed, who becomes the grandfather of David, through whose line the Messiah comes. A Moabitess, excluded by the letter of the law, is brought into the very heart of Israel's covenant story, because she came on Israel's terms, through Israel's God, under Israel's law.

This is the pattern. This is what Ezekiel 47 describes on a grand scale. In the millennium, multitudes of Gentiles will do what Ruth did. They will come to Israel's God. They will dwell among Israel's people. They will submit to Israel's law. And they will receive an inheritance alongside the tribes of Israel.

### **Isaiah's Confirmation**

The prophet Isaiah provides the same picture from a different angle. In chapter 56, God speaks directly to the strangers and assures them that they are not shut out.

*"Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." (Isaiah 56:3-5 KJV)*

God anticipates the objection. The stranger says, "The LORD has utterly separated me from his people. I have no part in this. The covenant is not mine." And God responds: do not say that. If you

keep my Sabbaths, if you choose the things that please me, if you take hold of my covenant, I will give you a place in my house. A name better than sons and daughters. An everlasting name.

Notice the conditions. It is not unconditional inclusion. The stranger must join himself to the Lord. He must keep the Sabbaths. He must take hold of God's covenant. He must come on God's terms, through God's system, via God's people. There is no separate entrance. There is no alternative pathway. The stranger enters through Israel's door, or he does not enter at all.

And then Isaiah continues:

*"Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."  
(Isaiah 56:6-7 KJV)*

A house of prayer for all people. This is the millennial temple. This is the house that Ezekiel describes in such extraordinary detail. And God says the strangers who come, who serve Him, who love His name, who keep His Sabbath, who take hold of His covenant, they will be brought to His holy mountain. Their offerings will be accepted. They will worship alongside Israel.

But mark it carefully: they come to *His* mountain. They worship at *His* altar. They keep *His* Sabbath. They take hold of *His* covenant. The terms are not negotiated. The framework is not adjusted to accommodate them. They enter into what God has already established through Israel.

## **Zechariah's Vision**

Zechariah provides yet another window into this reality of the Gentiles place in the millennium. In the final chapter of his prophecy, he describes what happens when the nations fail to come to Jerusalem to worship.

*"And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain." (Zechariah 14:16-17 KJV)*

The Feast of Tabernacles is a feast that was given to Israel. It commemorates God's dwelling with Israel in the wilderness. It celebrates the harvest that God provides in the promised land. And it foretells God's final harvest in His plan of salvation. It is an Israelite feast, rooted in Israelite history, centred on the Israelite temple in the Israelite capital. And in the millennium, every nation on earth will be required to come to Jerusalem to keep it. Not their own festivals. Not their own religious traditions. The Feast of Tabernacles. God's feast, given to God's people, in God's city. And if they refuse, there will be no rain, which is another way of saying they will suffer severe famine.

This is not harsh. This is the logical consequence of the truth we have been tracing throughout this book. God chose Israel as the vehicle of blessing. He established His worship system through Israel. He placed His name in Jerusalem. And in the millennium, when the kingdom is established and Christ reigns from Zion, the entire world will learn what Israel was always meant to teach them: how to worship the true God.

*"And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." (Zechariah 8:21-23 KJV)*

Even the Gentiles that do not permanently dwell with Israel don't create their own worship system. Annually, they come to Jerusalem. They keep Israel's feasts. They offer at Israel's altar. They learn from Israel's priests. And in doing so, they receive the blessing that God promised to all families of the earth through Abraham's seed.

### **The Fulfilment of Abraham's Promise**

We must never lose sight of the thread that runs from Genesis 12 to Ezekiel 47. When God called Abraham, He said:

*"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:3 KJV)*

*In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* Not independently of thee. Not instead of thee. Not by replacing thee. In thee. Through thee. By means of thee.

The strangers' inheritance in Ezekiel 47 is the millennial fulfilment of this promise. The blessings that come from true worship in Zechariah 14 is also the fulfillment of this promise. All families of the earth are blessed, through Israel. Some Gentiles receive land, inheritance, and standing, through the tribal structure of Israel. Others receive all the blessings that come from being in

relationship with the true God. These blessings flow from God, through Israel, to the nations. The channel has never changed. The mechanism has never been altered. God chose a specific family to be the conduit of blessing to the whole world, and in the millennium, we see that purpose fully operational.

This is why replacement theology is so devastating. If the church has replaced Israel, then the channel is destroyed. If the promises to Israel have been transferred to a Gentile institution, then there is no longer a mechanism for the fulfilment of Genesis 12:3. The whole system collapses. But if God is faithful, if the promises to Israel stand, if the covenant is eternal, then the mechanism is intact, and all families of the earth will be blessed, in Abraham, through Israel, under Christ.

### **The Distinction Preserved**

It is important to observe what Ezekiel 47 does *not* say. It does not say that the tribal distinctions are abolished. It does not say that the strangers become a thirteenth tribe. It does not say that Israel and the Gentiles are merged into an undifferentiated mass. The twelve tribes remain. The tribal allotments remain. The strangers receive their inheritance *within* the existing tribal framework.

The distinction between Israel and the nations is not erased in the millennium. It is maintained. But it is maintained in a way that blesses the nations rather than excluding them. Israel remains God's covenant people, His peculiar treasure, His kingdom of priests. The strangers are the beneficiaries of that priesthood. They come to learn. They come to worship. They come to receive. And they are welcomed, loved, and given an inheritance.

This is the beauty of God's plan. It is not uniformity. It is not the abolition of distinction. It is the ordering of distinctions in such a way that blessing flows from God, through His chosen vehicle, to every family on the face of the earth. The distinction serves the

blessing. The distinction makes the blessing possible. Without the channel, there is no flow. Without Israel, there is no mechanism for the salvation of the nations.

### **Grafted In, Not Swapped Out**

The apostle Paul described this reality in his letter to the Romans, using the metaphor of the olive tree. The natural branches are Israel. Some were broken off because of unbelief. And the Gentiles, wild olive branches, were grafted in among them to partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree (Romans 11:17). But Paul's warning is sharp and direct:

*"Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." (Romans 11:18 KJV)*

If you are a Gentile, you do not bear the root. The root bears you. The Gentile believer has no independent standing. He is sustained by the root of Israel's covenant. He is grafted into Israel's tree. He partakes of Israel's promises. And if he becomes arrogant, if he begins to think that God has abandoned the natural branches in his favour, Paul says: *be not highminded, but fear (Romans 11:20)*.

Ezekiel 47 is the millennial picture of what Paul describes theologically. The strangers are grafted in. They receive an inheritance alongside the tribes. They are treated as native-born. But the tree is Israel's tree. The land is Israel's land. The covenant is Israel's covenant. The stranger that dwells with them partakes of it by grace, not by right. And that grace flows through the channel that God established from the beginning.

### **A House of Prayer for All Nations**

When Christ cleansed the temple, He quoted from the very passage in Isaiah that we examined earlier. He said, "Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer?"

(Mark 11:17). He was quoting Isaiah 56:7. And He was declaring what the temple was always meant to be: a place where all nations could come to worship the God of Israel.

The money changers and the merchants had turned the Court of the Gentiles, the very space designated for non-Israelite worshippers, into a marketplace. They had effectively shut the Gentiles out of the house of prayer. And Christ was furious. Not because the Gentiles were being denied their own religion. But because the Gentiles were being denied access to God's house, God's worship, God's presence, through Israel's temple.

The millennial temple that Ezekiel describes will be what the temple was always supposed to be. A house of prayer for all nations. A place where the stranger can come and worship. A place where the Gentile can bring his offering and have it accepted. A place where the God of Israel receives worship from every nation on earth, through the system He established, in the city He chose, among the people He called.

And the strangers who come, who dwell among the tribes, who raise their families in the land, who keep the Sabbaths and the feasts, who love the name of the Lord, they will receive an inheritance alongside the children of Israel. Not because they earned it. Not because they had a right to it. But because God promised Abraham that in his seed, all families of the earth would be blessed. And God keeps His promises.

### **Looking Ahead**

In him, all the promises of God are yes, and amen. The promise to Abraham that all families of the earth would be blessed through his seed is fulfilled in the millennium through the inheritance of the strangers among the tribes. The command in the Torah to love the stranger as yourself is fulfilled in the kingdom when the stranger is treated as native-born. The prophecy in Isaiah that God's house

would be a house of prayer for all nations is fulfilled when the Gentiles come to the millennial temple to worship. The vision in Zechariah of all nations keeping the Feast of Tabernacles is fulfilled when the Gentiles go up to Jerusalem year by year.

None of these promises required the abolition of Israel. None of them required replacement theology. None of them required the church to take over Israel's role. Every one of them is fulfilled through Israel, with Israel in her rightful place, as the covenant people of God, the kingdom of priests, the vehicle of blessing to all the earth.

The stranger receives an inheritance. But the inheritance is in the land that God promised to Israel. The stranger that dwells among Israel is treated as native-born. But he is native-born *among the children of Israel*. The stranger brings his offering. But he brings it to Israel's altar, in Israel's temple, in Israel's city. The channel is intact. The covenant is intact. And the blessing flows, exactly as God planned it from the beginning.

In Chapter 17, we will examine how the redeemed remnant of Israel functions as the "dew of the LORD" in the midst of many peoples, becoming the source of blessing and spiritual life that God always intended them to be.

## Israel as the Dew of the LORD

In the previous two chapters, we examined the place of the Gentiles in the millennial kingdom. We saw that Sodom and Samaria will be restored, that strangers who dwell among Israel will receive an inheritance alongside the twelve tribes, and that even the Gentile nations who remain outside the land will be required to come up to Jerusalem annually to worship the King and keep the Feast of Tabernacles. The blessing flows outward from Israel to the nations, through the covenant structure that God established from the beginning.

But we have not yet addressed the most fundamental question: what makes the blessing flow? What is it about restored Israel that causes the nations to be blessed? The answer is found in one of the most beautiful and compact prophecies in the Hebrew Bible, in the book of Micah. And the image God uses is striking in its simplicity: dew.

### **The Remnant as Dew**

*"And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." (Micah 5:7 KJV)*

Consider the image carefully. Dew does not come from the earth. It comes from above. It descends silently, without human effort, without human initiation, and it refreshes everything it touches. The grass does not produce the dew. The grass receives it. And the dew does not wait for the grass to ask for it. It simply comes, according to the rhythm that God has established in the natural order.

This is what restored Israel will be in the midst of many peoples. Not a political power imposing its will. Not a military force conquering nations. Not an empire demanding tribute. Dew. A quiet, life-giving presence that refreshes and sustains the peoples among whom Israel dwells. And the source of that dew is not Israel herself. It is the LORD. The dew is *from the LORD*. Israel is the vessel through which the dew falls, but the moisture itself comes from heaven.

This is the priesthood functioning as God always intended. Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests (*Exodus 19:6*). A priest mediates between God and man. He brings God's blessing to the people, and he brings the people's worship to God. In the millennium, this is exactly what Israel does. She mediates. The blessing of God, the water of the Spirit, the instruction of the Torah, the knowledge of the true God, all of it flows through Israel to the nations. Israel is the dew, and the nations are the grass.

Notice that Micah says the dew *tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men*. The blessing does not depend on Gentile initiative. God does not wait for the nations to come seeking Him before He sends His refreshing. He sends it through Israel, and it falls on the peoples who are in Israel's midst. This is sovereign grace operating through the covenant vehicle. The nations do not orchestrate it. They receive it.

## **The Dual Nature of the Remnant**

The very next verse in Micah provides the complementary picture. If verse 7 describes Israel as dew, gentle and life-giving, verse 8 describes the same remnant in a very different light:

*"And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver." (Micah 5:8 KJV)*

The same remnant that is dew to those who receive the blessing is a lion to those who resist. This is not a contradiction. It is the full picture of what the kingdom of priests looks like in operation. To the teachable, to the humble, to the nations who come to Jerusalem and take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, Israel is dew. Refreshing. Life-giving. Gentle.

But to the proud, to the rebellious, to the nations who refuse to come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (*Zechariah 14:17*), to those who resent God's choice of Israel and chafe under His authority, Israel is a lion. Irresistible. Unstoppable. None can deliver.

This dual nature reflects the character of God Himself. He is merciful to the humble and terrible to the proud. He gives grace to the lowly and resists the haughty. In the millennium, Israel embodies both of these qualities as God's representative on earth. The nations are not compelled to rebel. They are given every opportunity to receive the blessing. But if they refuse, there are consequences. The lion is as real as the dew.

## **The Priesthood Restored**

The concept of Israel as dew is inseparable from the concept of the priesthood. Throughout Israel's history, the priesthood was

meant to be the mechanism by which God's presence, instruction, and blessing reached the people. The priests taught the Torah. The priests offered the sacrifices. The priests maintained the temple. The priests mediated between God and man.

But the priesthood failed. Malachi records God's indictment of the priests in the sharpest terms:

*"For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts."  
(Malachi 2:7-8 KJV)*

The priests were supposed to keep knowledge. They were supposed to be the source of Torah instruction. They were the messengers of the LORD of hosts. But they departed from the way. They caused the people to stumble. They corrupted the covenant.

In the millennium, this failure is reversed. Ezekiel describes a restored priesthood, the sons of Zadok, who will serve in the millennial temple (*Ezekiel 44:15-16*). These are priests who kept God's charge when all Israel went astray. And alongside the Levitical priesthood, the entire nation of Israel functions in a priestly capacity toward the nations. Israel teaches. Israel instructs. Israel mediates. Israel is the dew.

Isaiah describes this priestly function with extraordinary clarity:

*"But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves."  
(Isaiah 61:6 KJV)*

Priests of the LORD. Ministers of God. This is not a metaphor for the church in the present age. This is the millennial reality. Israel, restored, cleansed, filled with the Spirit, her pride removed and her heart circumcised, functioning at last as the kingdom of priests that God called her to be at Sinai. And the riches of the Gentiles flow toward Israel, not as plunder, but as the natural movement of gratitude from those who receive the blessing toward those through whom the blessing comes. Paul makes this clear referencing the principle in Leviticus 6.16-18 when he says,

*"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:13-14 KJV)*

### **The Knowledge of the LORD**

One of the defining characteristics of the millennial age is the universal spread of the knowledge of God. The prophets describe this in some of the most luminous language in all of Scripture:

*"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9 KJV)*

The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. This is total saturation. There will be no corner of the earth untouched by the knowledge of God. No people group unreached. No nation left in ignorance. The knowledge of the LORD will be everywhere, like water filling every depression in the seabed, reaching every hidden crevice.

But how does this knowledge spread? Through what mechanism does it reach every nation and every people? Through Israel. The dew falls from heaven, through Israel, onto the nations.

The priests of the LORD teach. The ministers of God instruct. The Torah goes forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (*Isaiah 2:3*). The nations do not discover God on their own. They learn of Him through the people He chose for this very purpose.

This is the answer to the question that has hovered over the entire book: why Israel? Why did God choose one family, one nation, one people? Because God's plan required a vehicle, a channel, a priesthood. Not a vague, universal spirituality accessible to all people equally. A specific, structured, covenantal system through which His blessing, His instruction, His knowledge, and His Spirit could flow from heaven to earth. Israel is that system. Israel is the dew.

### **The Spirit Poured Out**

The dew imagery in Micah is closely connected to the prophetic promise of the outpouring of God's Spirit. In the Hebrew Bible, water imagery and Spirit imagery are often interchangeable. When God promises to pour water on the thirsty land, He is speaking of the Spirit:

*"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses." (Isaiah 44:3-4 KJV)*

Notice the progression. God pours water on the thirsty. He pours His Spirit on Israel's seed. And then they spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. The Spirit falls on Israel, and Israel becomes the source of life for the surrounding landscape. The dew falls, and the grass grows.

This is not the first fruits of the Spirit that the church receives in the present age. This is the full harvest. The first fruits are the down payment, the earnest, the guarantee of what is to come. But in the millennium, the Spirit is poured out on all Israel (*Isaiah 32:15, Ezekiel 39:29, Joel 2:28-29*), and through Israel, the blessing overflows to the nations. The dew that Micah describes is, at its deepest level, the Holy Spirit flowing through restored Israel to the peoples of the earth.

Ezekiel confirms this in his vision of the river that flows from the temple:

*"Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh." (Ezekiel 47:8-9 KJV)*

The waters flow from the temple, which is the centre of Israel's worship, the seat of God's presence, the heart of the covenant. And wherever the waters flow, everything lives. The dead sea is healed. The fish multiply. The trees bear fruit every month. Life, abundant and overflowing, wherever the water reaches.

The physical reality parallels the spiritual. Israel is the dew of the LORD writ large. The Spirit flows from God's throne, through God's temple, through God's people, to the nations. Everything it touches lives. This is the millennial reality. This is what God has been working toward since Genesis 12. A people through whom His life, His Spirit, His blessing, and His knowledge flow to the entire earth.

## **The First Fruits and the Full Harvest**

The church in the present age is the first fruits of this harvest. We who have received the Holy Spirit, who have been grafted into Israel's olive tree, who partake of the root and fatness of Israel's covenant, we are the foretaste of what is to come. We are, in a sense, the first drops of the dew. But we are not the full harvest.

The full harvest comes when all Israel is saved (*Romans 11:26*). When the blindness is lifted. When the Spirit is poured out on the whole nation. When the dry bones live again and the two sticks become one. When the kingdom of priests is fully operational, and the Torah goes forth from Zion, and the nations stream to Jerusalem to learn of God. That is the full dew. That is the complete outpouring. That is what Paul means when he says, "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (*Romans 11:15*).

Life from the dead. This is what Israel's restoration means for the world. If Israel's temporary rejection resulted in the gospel going out to the Gentiles, what will Israel's full restoration mean? It will mean life from the dead for the whole earth. The dew will fall in full measure. The river will flow without obstruction. The knowledge of the LORD will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. And the nations, refreshed, instructed, and blessed through Israel's priestly ministry, will say: "Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem" (*Zechariah 8:21*).

### **Not by Israel's Merit**

It is essential to understand that Israel's role as the dew is not a reward for Israel's righteousness. Israel was not chosen because she was better than the nations. Deuteronomy makes this explicit:

*"The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."  
(Deuteronomy 7:7-8 KJV)*

God chose Israel because He loved Israel, and because He swore an oath to her fathers. Not because of her merit. Not because of her size. Not because of her character. In fact, as we have seen throughout this study, Israel's character was worse than Sodom's. Her rebellion was more grievous than any other nation's. Her pride was the deepest and most destructive of all.

And yet God chose her. And God purified her. And God filled her with His Spirit. And God made her the dew of the LORD in the midst of many peoples. This is grace from beginning to end. The dew does not originate in the grass. It comes from above. And the priestly blessing that Israel mediates does not originate in Israel. It comes from God. Israel is the vessel. God is the source. And the nations are the beneficiaries.

This is why pride is so devastating, and why it had to be removed before Israel can function as the dew. A proud priest is a useless priest. A priest who believes the blessing comes from himself rather than from God is a priest who has lost sight of his purpose. The entire history of Israel's failure, from the golden calf to the Sanhedrin's rejection of Christ, is the story of a priesthood corrupted by pride. And the entire story of Israel's restoration is the story of pride being removed, so that the priesthood can finally function as it was always meant to.

## **The Final Revolt as Confirmation**

The significance of Israel's priestly role in the millennium is confirmed by what happens at its conclusion. When the thousand years are ended, Satan is released from his prison, and he goes out to deceive the nations (*Revelation 20:7-8*). The deception is aimed at the Gentile nations, not at Israel. Israel dwells with God. Israel is at one with Him. The nations are the ones who are deceived.

And what is the nature of the deception? The nations are gathered together against the camp of the saints and the beloved city (*Revelation 20:9*). They rebel against Jerusalem. They rebel against the very system through which they have been receiving the blessing for a thousand years. They rebel against the dew. The deception we see in Revelation 20 is a continuation of the deception that climaxed immediately before the return of Christ. In fact, the climax of the deception necessitated Christ's return.

*"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." (Luke 21:20 KJV) "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matthew 24:21-22 KJV)*

In context, the flesh that must be saved is the flesh of the elect, Israel. God's chosen people. Satan's deception has a purpose. To destroy Israel and by so doing, destroy the covenantal promises.

*"And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child." (Revelation 12:13 KJV)*

The woman which brought forth the manchild is Israel (specifically, the tribe of Judah). This deception-driven hatred is the

first order of business as soon as Satan is released after the millennium. He immediately rage baits the nations to turn on Israel with the intent to destroy her.

This confirms that throughout the millennium, the nations remain distinct from Israel. They are blessed through Israel. They receive the knowledge of God through Israel. They come to Jerusalem to worship. But they are not Israel. They are not in the covenant. And when Satan taps into the pride that still lingers in unregenerate human hearts, the resentment surfaces: why should they be above us? Why should God dwell with them and not with us? Why should we have to go to their city, keep their feasts, learn from their priests?

This is the same spirit that Paul warned against in Romans 11. The same spirit that drives replacement theology. The same spirit that says God must be fair, that there should be no distinctions, that one people should not be elevated above another. And God's answer to that rebellion is fire from heaven (*Revelation 20:9*). The dew was offered. The lion was provoked. God settles the matter once and for all.

### **Looking Ahead**

Israel as the dew of the LORD is the capstone of Part V. The millennial kingdom is not merely a political arrangement in which Christ rules the earth from Jerusalem. It is a priestly arrangement in which Israel, restored and Spirit-filled, mediates the blessing of God to every nation on the face of the earth. The strangers who dwell among Israel receive an inheritance. The nations who come up to Jerusalem receive instruction. And the knowledge of the LORD covers the earth as the waters cover the sea. All of this flows through the channel that God established when He called Abraham out of Ur, and swore to him that in his seed, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

In Part VI, we will fast forward and leave the millennium in the rear-view mirror. We will enter the eternal state. The marriage of the Lamb takes place. The New Jerusalem descends from heaven. And we will see the final, permanent, glorious fulfilment of every promise that God ever made to the house of Israel. The beauty is adorned. The cosmos is arranged. And God dwells with His people forever.

P A R T   V I

*The Eternal State: The Marriage and  
the Nations*

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*Chapter 18*

## **The Bride, the Lamb's Wife**

We have now traced the biblical narrative from Genesis to the end of the millennium. We have seen God choose Israel, enter into covenant with her, endure her rebellion, scatter her among the nations, and then, in faithfulness to His own word, restore her, cleanse her, fill her with His Spirit, and use her as the dew of the LORD to bless every family on the face of the earth. The millennium was the kingdom in operation. The priesthood restored. The Torah going forth from Zion. The nations coming up to Jerusalem. The strangers receiving their inheritance. All of it flowing through the channel that God established when He called Abraham.

But the millennium is not the end of the story. The millennium is the penultimate chapter. And now, in Revelation 21 and 22, we come to the climax of the entire biblical narrative: the eternal state. The moment toward which every promise, every covenant, every prophecy has been pointing since Genesis 12. The moment when God's word is finally, fully, and permanently vindicated.

And at the centre of this climax is a wedding.

### **The Vision**

*"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they*

*shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." (Revelation 21:1-3 KJV)*

Everything in this passage must be read in light of everything that has come before it. This is not a new idea. This is not something that appears suddenly at the end of the Bible with no antecedent. Every phrase in these three verses echoes promises that God made centuries, even millennia, earlier. And if we have been paying attention, if we have been following the thread that begins at Moses and runs through every prophet, every psalm, every apostle, then when we arrive here, our response should be: yes. In Him, all the promises of God are yes, and amen.

Let us consider each element carefully.

### **A New Heaven and a New Earth**

The first thing John sees is a new heaven and a new earth. The old order has passed away. The heavens and the earth that witnessed the fall, the flood, the scattering of Babel, the empires that subjugated Jerusalem, the crucifixion, the centuries of exile, the tribulation, and the millennium itself, all of that is gone. Something entirely new has taken its place.

But this is not an unforeseen event. Isaiah prophesied it:

*"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."  
(Isaiah 65:17 KJV)*

God declared through Isaiah that He would create new heavens and a new earth. And in the very next verse, He says: *But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy (Isaiah 65:18)*. The new creation and the new Jerusalem are linked. They arrive together. The new heavens and the new earth are not a replacement for Israel. They are the stage on which Israel's final glory is displayed. God

creates the new heavens and the new earth so that Jerusalem can be a rejoicing and her people a joy. The purpose of the new creation is the glorification of God in Israel.

### **The Holy City, New Jerusalem**

And then John sees the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. This city does not rise from the earth. It descends from above. It is a heavenly construction, prepared by God Himself, and it comes down to dwell on the new earth.

Later in the chapter, the angel tells John what this city is:

*"And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;" (Revelation 21:9-11 KJV)*

The angel says: come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife. And then he shows John a city. The bride is a city. The city is the bride. And the city is Jerusalem. Not Rome. Not Constantinople. Not Mecca. Not any Gentile capital. Jerusalem. The city where God placed His name. The city where the temple stood. The city where the covenant was established. The city that the prophets wept over and the psalmists sang about. The city to which Christ will return and from which He will reign. Jerusalem.

This is the marriage that the entire Bible has been anticipating. God said to Israel through Hosea: *I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies (Hosea 2:19)*. He said through Jeremiah: *I was an husband unto them (Jeremiah*

31:32). He said through Isaiah: *For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name (Isaiah 54:5)*. And He said through Ezekiel, after the devastating indictment of chapter 16: *Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant (Ezekiel 16:60)*.

This is not a marriage to the church as a separate institution from Israel. This is the marriage to Israel. The bride is Israel. The city is Jerusalem. And the church, as the first fruits of Israel's harvest, is part of the bride, but not the whole bride. The bride is the entire covenant people of God, cleansed, restored, glorified, and adorned to glorify her husband.

### **Adorned for Her Husband**

The language that John uses is deliberate and precise. The New Jerusalem is described as *prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*. The Greek word translated "adorned" is *kosmeo*, from which we derive the word *cosmos*. It means to arrange, to put in order, to decorate, to beautify.

This is the same word family that appears in John 3:16. When Christ said, "For God so loved the *kosmos*," He was not speaking in the Greek philosophical sense of the entire universe. He was speaking in the Hebrew sense of the ordered arrangement, the adornment, the decorated bride. The *kosmos* is Israel. The adornment of God. The beauty that He created, arranged, and glorified for His own name's sake.

Recall what God said to Israel through Ezekiel:

*"I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked*

*with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom." (Ezekiel 16:11-13 KJV)*

The Hebrew word translated "decked" in verse 13 is *adah*, which carries the same meaning as the Greek *kosmeo*: to adorn, to arrange, to put in orderly arrangement. God adorned Israel. He arranged her. He decorated her. She is His *kosmos*, His beauty, His glory. And when she fell into pride and harlotry, God did not abandon her. He promised to remember His covenant. He promised to establish an everlasting covenant. He promised to do whatever it took, even sending His own Son, to restore His bride.

And now, in Revelation 21, the promise is fulfilled. The bride is adorned. The *kosmos* is arranged. The New Jerusalem descends, *kosmeo* for her husband. Everything that God promised in Ezekiel 16, everything that was lost through Israel's pride, everything that the crucifixion made possible, is now realized. The beauty has been restored. The adornment is complete. And the wedding takes place.

### **The Twelve Gates and the Twelve Foundations**

Lest there be any doubt about the identity of the bride, John provides unmistakable markers:

*"And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:" (Revelation 21:12 KJV)*

Twelve gates. Twelve tribes. The names of the children of Israel are written on the gates of the eternal city. Every person who enters the New Jerusalem, for all eternity, enters through a gate that bears the name of an Israelite tribe. There is no Gentile gate. There is no gate labelled "Church." There is no separate entrance for those who

are not of Israel. You enter through Judah, or through Ephraim, or through Benjamin, or through one of the other nine tribes. But you enter through Israel.

And then the foundations:

*"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."  
(Revelation 21:14 KJV)*

Twelve foundations. Twelve apostles. And who were the twelve apostles? They were all Jews. Every one of them. Not a single Gentile among them. The eternal city rests on Jewish foundations, with Jewish gates, bearing the name of a Jewish God, built for a Jewish bride. This is not generic. This is not universal in the sense that modern Christianity imagines. This is the covenant fulfilled. This is God making good on every promise He ever made to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to David, and to the prophets.

The church is not absent from this picture. The church is present, in the foundations. The apostles are the foundations. And the apostles were the first fruits of Israel's harvest, the ones who received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the ones who carried the gospel to the Jews and the Gentiles. But the apostles were Jews. The foundations are Jewish. And the Gentile believers who were grafted into the olive tree are inside the city because they entered through Israel's gates, built on Israel's foundations, under Israel's covenant. The root bears the branches. The branches do not bear the root.

### **The Tabernacle of God Is with Men**

John hears a great voice from heaven: *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God (Revelation 21:3)*. This is the fulfilment of the most repeated

promise in all of Scripture: I will be your God, and you shall be my people.

We heard it in Jeremiah 31:33, in the promise of the new covenant. We heard it in Ezekiel 37:27, in the prophecy of the restored temple. We heard it in Leviticus 26:12, in the terms of the Mosaic covenant. We heard it through Hosea, when God said that those who were called "not my people" would again be called "my people." And now, in the eternal state, it reaches its final and permanent expression. God dwells with His people. The tabernacle is not temporary. The dwelling is not provisional. It is eternal.

And notice: *they shall be his people*. Not "all of humanity shall be his people." The "*they*" who dwell with God in the New Jerusalem are the covenant people. The bride. Israel. The twelve tribes whose names are on the gates. The apostles whose names are on the foundations. The first fruits and the full harvest. These are God's people. And He is their God.

The nations are not excluded from existence. As we will see in the following chapters, the nations are very much alive. They walk in the light of the New Jerusalem. They bring their glory and honour into it. But they are not inside the city in the same way that Israel is inside the city. The bride lives with the groom. The guests attend the feast. And there is a difference between the two.

### **The Everlasting Covenant Fulfilled**

Everything we see in Revelation 21 is the fulfilment of what God promised in Ezekiel 16:60: *Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant*. The everlasting covenant is now established. Not partially. Not provisionally. Permanently.

The pride that destroyed Israel has been removed. The idolatry that defiled her has been purged. The harlotry that scattered her

among the nations has been forgiven. The bill of divorce that separated the northern kingdom from God has been dissolved by the death and resurrection of Christ. The two sticks of Judah and Ephraim have been made one. The dry bones live again. The captivity has ended. The enemies have been crushed. The millennium has run its course. And now, at last, the wedding takes place.

This is what Paul was reaching for when he said, *For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us (2 Corinthians 1:20)*. Every single promise. Not some of them. Not the ones that fit neatly into a Gentile theological framework. All of them. The promise to Abraham that his seed would be a blessing. The promise to Moses that God would circumcise their hearts. The promise to David that his throne would endure forever. The promise to Jeremiah of a new covenant. The promise to Ezekiel of a new heart and a new spirit. The promise to Hosea that "not my people" would be called "my people" again. All of them, yes and amen, in this moment, in this city, in this bride, in this marriage.

### **What This Means for the Reader**

If the bride is the church in the sense that modern Christianity defines it, a Gentile institution that has replaced Israel, then none of this makes sense. Why are the gates named after the twelve tribes? Why are the foundations named after twelve Jewish apostles? Why does the city bear the name Jerusalem? Why does God echo the exact language of the covenant He made with Israel through Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea?

But if the bride is Israel, the covenant people of God, including the Gentiles who have been grafted into the olive tree and have entered through Israel's gates, then everything makes sense. The gates are named after the twelve tribes because the bride is Israel.

The foundations are named after the twelve apostles because the apostles are the first fruits of Israel's harvest. The city is called Jerusalem because God put His name there, and His name endures forever. And the language of "I will be your God and you shall be my people" echoes throughout the passage because this is the same covenant, the same promise, the same God, fulfilling the same word that He spoke to Abraham four thousand years ago.

In him, all the promises of God are yes, and amen. Beginning at Moses, we can trace every thread. And every thread leads here: to the bride, adorned for her husband, descending from heaven, bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The *kosmos* is complete. The *adah* is perfect. The wedding has come. And God dwells with His people forever.

### **Looking Ahead**

In the next chapter, we will examine what Revelation 21 tells us about the nations who live outside the New Jerusalem. They are not destroyed. They are not forgotten. They walk in the light of the city and bring their glory into it. But they are outside the walls, and the walls have gates, and the gates serve a purpose. The distinction between Israel and the nations is not abolished in the eternal state. It is fulfilled.

## *Chapter 19*

# **The Nations Outside the City**

In the previous chapter, we saw the New Jerusalem descend from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. We identified the bride as Israel: the twelve gates bearing the names of the twelve tribes, the twelve foundations bearing the names of the twelve apostles, the city itself called Jerusalem. The marriage of the Lamb is the marriage to Israel. The everlasting covenant promised in Ezekiel 16:60 has been established. God dwells with His people.

But the bride is not all that exists in the eternal state. The nations are there too. They are alive. They have eternal life. They are not destroyed, not forgotten, not excluded from God's blessing. And yet, they are not in the city. They are outside it. They walk in its light. They bring their glory into it. But they do not dwell within its walls.

This distinction, more than almost any other detail in Revelation 21 and 22, demonstrates that the separation between Israel and the nations is not a temporary arrangement. It is not a feature of the fallen world that will be swept away in the new creation. It is a permanent, structural feature of God's eternal order. And it is not a mark of cruelty. It is a mark of covenant faithfulness.

## **The Nations Walk in the Light**

*"And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it."  
(Revelation 21:24-26 KJV)*

Let us read this carefully. The nations are saved. They are not under judgment. They are not in the lake of fire. They are alive, and they are walking in the light of the New Jerusalem. They have kings. They have glory. They have honour. And they bring these things into the city.

But notice the direction of the movement. They walk in the light *of it*. The light does not come from them. It comes from the city. The New Jerusalem is the source of light, because God Himself is in the city, and the Lamb is the light thereof (Revelation 21:23). The nations do not generate their own light. They receive the light that radiates from the city, from the presence of God dwelling with Israel.

This is the eternal expression of the same principle we traced throughout the millennium. Israel is the dew. Israel is the priesthood. Israel is the channel through which the blessing of God reaches the nations. In the millennium, the nations came up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. In the eternal state, the nations walk in the light that shines from the New Jerusalem. The mechanism has not changed. The channel has not been replaced. The nations are blessed through Israel, forever.

And the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it. They come bearing gifts. They come bringing the best of what they have. This is not tribute extracted by force. This is the natural movement of gratitude and worship from those who receive the

blessing toward the source of the blessing. The light comes out. The glory comes in. And the exchange never ceases.

### **The Gates Shall Not Be Shut**

John tells us that the gates of the city shall not be shut at all by day, and there is no night there. In an ancient city, the gates were shut at night for security. Open gates signified peace and safety. The gates of the New Jerusalem are never shut, because there is no threat. There is no enemy. There is no night. The conditions that required closed gates no longer exist.

But the gates are still there. The walls are still there. And this is significant. If there were no distinction between those inside the city and those outside the city, there would be no need for walls and gates. A wall without a purpose is merely decoration. But the walls and gates of the New Jerusalem are not decorative. They serve a structural purpose. They define a boundary. They distinguish between the bride who dwells within and the nations who come in through the gates to bring their offerings.

The gates are open. The nations are welcome. But they enter as visitors, not as residents. They come in to bring their glory and honour, and they go out again. The bride lives in the city. The nations live outside it. This is not oppression. This is order. This is the cosmos, the orderly arrangement that God has designed from the beginning.

And then this:

*"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:27 KJV)*

Only those written in the Lamb's book of life enter the city. Nothing that defiles, nothing that works abomination, nothing that

makes a lie can come in. The city is pure. The bride is pure. The pride that once defiled Israel has been removed forever. The idolatry that drove her into harlotry is gone. The flaw has been extracted. And the city that descends from heaven is holy, because God Himself dwells within it.

### **Above All Nations**

This picture in Revelation 21 is the fulfilment of one of the oldest promises in the Torah. When God laid out the terms of the covenant at Sinai, He told Israel what obedience would produce:

*"And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them:" (Deuteronomy 28:13 KJV)*

Israel was to be the head, not the tail. Above, and not beneath. Throughout her history, this promise was never fully realized. Israel was subjugated by Egypt, by Assyria, by Babylon, by Persia, by Greece, by Rome, and by the Islamic caliphates. For more than two thousand years, Israel was beneath, not above. The tail, not the head. The covenant curses were in full operation, because the covenant had been broken.

But the curses were not the end of the story. The curses were a provision within the covenant, designed to drive Israel to repentance. And after the repentance, after the restoration, after the millennium, after the final judgment, God fulfils the original promise. In the eternal state, Israel is above all nations. Not in the arrogance that destroyed her. Not in the pride that was worse than Sodom's. But in the humility of a bride who has been cleansed, restored, and adorned by her husband. Israel is above all nations because God put her there, in fulfilment of His word.

Isaiah saw this:

*"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." (Isaiah 60:1-3 KJV)*

The glory of the LORD rises upon Israel. The Gentiles come to her light. The kings come to the brightness of her rising. This is exactly what Revelation 21:24 describes: the nations walking in the light of the New Jerusalem, the kings bringing their glory and honour into it. Isaiah and John are describing the same reality. The prophets and the apostle agree. Beginning at Moses, through the prophets, and now in the Revelation, the testimony is one: Israel is the light-bearer, and the nations come to the light.

### **The Servants and Their God**

Revelation 22 provides further detail about the life of those who dwell within the city. And the language makes clear that the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem occupy a unique position that is not shared by the nations outside.

*"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: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. 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." (Revelation 22:3-5 KJV)*

Notice the specifics. His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face. His name shall be in their foreheads. They shall reign forever and ever. These are not descriptions of the nations. These

are descriptions of the bride, the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, the covenant people of God.

His name is in their foreheads. The nations do not have His name in their foreheads. Israel has His name in her foreheads, because Israel is the *adah*, the adornment, the glory of the high priest. The breastplate of the high priest bore the names of the twelve tribes. The high priest carried Israel on his heart before God. And now, in the eternal state, the great High Priest's name is upon Israel. It is written on their foreheads. They are His bride, visibly, permanently, unmistakably.

They shall see His face. This is the most intimate possible communion with God. To see the face of God was, in the Torah, to die (Exodus 33:20). Even Moses was only permitted to see God's back. But in the eternal state, the covenant people see His face. They dwell in His immediate presence. They have unmediated access to God Himself. This is the consummation of the promise: I will be your God, and you shall be my people.

They shall reign forever and ever. Israel reigns. Not as conquerors, but as priests. Not as tyrants, but as the ordained administrators of God's eternal order. The kingdom of priests that God called for at Sinai (*Exodus 19:6*) is now fully and permanently operational. Israel reigns over the nations, and the nations walk in the light that God gives to Israel. The structure is permanent. The covenant is eternal. And the promise is fulfilled.

The nations, by contrast, have eternal life. They are blessed. They are saved. They walk in the light. They bring their glory. But they do not have His name in their foreheads. They do not see His face in the same intimate, unmediated way. They do not reign. They are the blessed recipients of the light that flows from God, through Israel, to them. And they are grateful. There is no resentment in the eternal state. The pride that fuelled the final rebellion at the end of

the millennium has been judged and removed. What remains is a willing, joyful acknowledgement that God is God, Israel is His people, and the nations are blessed through her.

### **Not a Flaw, but a Feature**

Modern theology finds this picture uncomfortable. The notion that one people would be permanently elevated above all others offends the sensibilities of an age committed to the ideology of absolute equality. But the Bible has never taught absolute equality. The Bible teaches election. It teaches covenant. It teaches that God chooses, and that His choices are sovereign, irrevocable, and purposeful.

God chose Israel. He did not choose her because she was better than the nations. He chose her because He loved her and because He swore an oath to her fathers (*Deuteronomy 7:7-8*). And He chose her for a purpose: to be the channel through which His blessing would reach every family on the face of the earth. The distinction between Israel and the nations is not a flaw in God's plan. It is the plan. It is the mechanism by which the blessing flows. Without the channel, there is no flow. Without the priesthood, there is no mediation. Without Israel, there is no salvation for the nations.

And the nations themselves, in the eternal state, understand this. They do not resent it. They celebrate it. They bring their glory and honour into the city. They walk in its light with joy, not with bitterness. The satanic deception that whispered, "This is unfair; why should they be above you?" has been exposed and destroyed. The nations see clearly, for the first time, that the distinction was always for their benefit. Israel's elevation was never at their expense. It was the means of their salvation.

## **The Promise to Abraham, Fulfilled Forever**

When God said to Abraham, *in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed* (Genesis 12:3), He was describing precisely what we see in Revelation 21 and 22. All families of the earth are blessed. The nations have eternal life. They walk in the light. They bring their glory. They are saved. They are not excluded from God's goodness.

But the blessing comes through Abraham's seed. Through Israel. Through the city that bears the names of the twelve tribes. Through the foundations that bear the names of the twelve apostles. Through the bride who is adorned for her husband. The channel is intact. It was intact when God called Abraham. It was intact through every century of Israel's rebellion. It was intact through the crucifixion and the resurrection. It was intact through the millennium. And it is intact in the eternal state.

In him, all the promises of God are yes, and amen. God promised Abraham that his seed would be the source of blessing for the whole world. And in the eternal state, that is exactly what we see. Israel inside the city, radiating the light of God. The nations outside the city, walking in that light and bringing their honour into it. The promise fulfilled. The covenant vindicated. The channel operational. Forever.

### **Looking Ahead**

In the next chapter, we will examine the final image of the Bible's narrative: the river of life flowing from the throne of God through the city, and the tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. This image brings together everything we have studied. The water of the Spirit flows from God, through Israel, to the nations. The healing that the nations receive is mediated through the city, through the covenant people, through the priesthood that God established from the beginning. Israel

mediates. The Gentiles receive. And the Abrahamic promise is complete.

*Chapter 20*

## **The River, the Tree, and the Healing of the Nations**

We have seen the bride descend from heaven, adorned for her husband. We have seen the nations outside the city, walking in the light of the New Jerusalem, bringing their glory and honour into it. We have seen the distinction between Israel and the nations maintained in the eternal state: the servants of God inside the city with His name in their foreheads, the nations outside receiving the blessing that radiates from the presence of God dwelling with His people.

Now we come to the final image that the Bible gives us. And it is an image so rich, so layered, so deeply rooted in the story that began in Genesis, that it gathers the entire narrative into a single picture. It is the image of a river, a tree, and healing. And it brings us full circle, from the garden where man fell to the city where man is restored, from the curse that shut the way to the tree of life to the grace that reopens it.

## **The River of Life**

*"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." (Revelation 22:1 KJV)*

The river is pure. It is the water of life. It is clear as crystal. And its source is the throne of God and of the Lamb. This is not an earthly river with an earthly headwater. This is a divine river, proceeding from divine authority, carrying divine life.

The significance of the source cannot be overstated. The river proceeds from the throne. It originates with God. It flows through the city. And it goes out from the city to bring life wherever it reaches. The direction is always the same: from God, through the city, to the world beyond.

This is the pattern we have traced throughout this entire study. God's blessing does not come to the nations directly. It flows through a channel. In Genesis 12, the channel was Abraham's seed. At Sinai, the channel was the kingdom of priests. During the millennium, the channel was restored Israel functioning as the dew of the LORD. And in the eternal state, the channel is the New Jerusalem itself, the bride, the Lamb's wife, the city through which the river of life flows from the throne of God to the nations.

The river has not changed its course. From the first promise to Abraham to the last verse of Revelation, the water flows the same way: from God, through Abraham's seed, to the world.

## **The River in Ezekiel**

John's vision of the river in Revelation 22 is not the first time this image appears in Scripture. Ezekiel described a river flowing from the millennial temple with the same characteristics:

*"Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh." (Ezekiel 47:8-9 KJV)*

In Ezekiel's vision, the waters flow from the temple in Jerusalem, eastward toward the Dead Sea. And wherever the waters flow, the dead sea is healed. Fish multiply. Life abounds. Everything that the river touches lives.

The millennial river and the eternal river share the same source, the same direction, and the same effect. Both proceed from the presence of God. Both flow outward from the centre of Israel's worship. Both bring life to everything they reach. The river in Ezekiel 47 was the millennial expression of this principle. The river in Revelation 22 is the eternal expression. The principle has not changed. The channel has not changed. God gives life, and He gives it through the city, through the temple, through His people.

### **The Tree of Life**

*"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." (Revelation 22:2 KJV)*

The tree of life appears at the beginning of the Bible and at its end. In Genesis 2, God planted a garden in Eden and placed the tree of life in the midst of it (Genesis 2:9). Man had access to this tree. He could eat of it freely. But after the fall, God drove man out of the garden and placed cherubim with a flaming sword to guard the way

to the tree of life (*Genesis 3:24*). The access was cut off. The way was blocked. Man was separated from the source of eternal life because of sin.

And now, in Revelation 22, the tree of life reappears. It stands in the midst of the street of the New Jerusalem, on either side of the river. The way is no longer blocked. The cherubim with the flaming sword are gone. Access has been restored. But notice where the tree stands: in the city. In the New Jerusalem. In the bride. The tree of life is not out in the open, accessible to everyone equally without regard to the covenant structure. It is in the city, watered by the river that flows from the throne, part of the ordered arrangement that God has designed.

The tree bears twelve manner of fruits and yields its fruit every month. Twelve is the number of the tribes. It is the number of the apostles. It is the number of the gates and the number of the foundations. The tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, is embedded in the Israelite structure of the city. It is part of the cosmos, the ordered arrangement, the adornment of the bride.

### **The Leaves for the Healing of the Nations**

The word translated "healing" is the Greek *therapeia*, from which we derive the English word therapy. It carries the sense of ongoing care, of sustained treatment, of continuous service to health. This is not a one-time event. It is an ongoing provision. The nations receive continuous healing from the tree that stands in the city.

Now, why do the nations need healing? Because Israel does not. The flaw has been removed from Israel completely. The pride that was worse than Sodom's has been purged. The heart has been circumcised. The Spirit has been poured out. The bride has been cleansed and adorned. Israel, inside the city, dwelling with God, seeing His face, bearing His name on her foreheads, does not need

the leaves of the tree. Israel has the river. Israel has the throne. Israel has the Lamb.

The nations, outside the city, have eternal life. They are saved. They walk in the light. They bring their glory. But there is still a separation between them and the immediate presence of God. They do not have His name in their foreheads. They do not see His face in the same unmediated way. The risk of human nature experiencing resentment remains. As humans we are wired to demand fairness. When we think we are experiencing unfair treatment, we experience moral outrage. The leaves of the tree provide ongoing healing, ongoing care, ongoing sustenance, to ensure that the fallen nature, the pride that once produced rebellion, never stirs again. The leaves are the insurance. The leaves are the protection. The leaves are God's ongoing provision for the nations who live outside the covenant city.

And notice: the healing comes from the tree, which is in the city, which is watered by the river, which proceeds from the throne. The nations do not heal themselves. They are healed by what flows out from the New Jerusalem. Israel mediates. The Gentiles receive. The pattern is unbroken, from Genesis to Revelation.

### **From Eden to the New Jerusalem**

The symmetry between Genesis and Revelation is unmistakable. In Genesis, there is a garden. In Revelation, there is a city. In Genesis, there is a river that flows out of Eden to water the garden (*Genesis 2:10*). In Revelation, there is a river that flows from the throne of God through the city. In Genesis, there is a tree of life in the midst of the garden. In Revelation, there is a tree of life in the midst of the street. In Genesis, man loses access to the tree because of sin. In Revelation, access is restored through the Lamb.

But there is a critical difference between the beginning and the end. In Genesis, the garden was not a wilderness. It was a designed

landscape, planted by God Himself, ordered and beautiful, and Adam was instructed to dress it and keep it (*Genesis 2:15*). There was a covenant, for God has never related to man except through covenant. There was a priesthood, for God Himself functioned as the priest, officiating the first marriage when He brought the woman to the man (*Genesis 2:22*), and later facilitating the first sacrifice when He clothed them with skins (*Genesis 3:21*). And the Bible begins and ends with a wedding. In Genesis, God brings the bride to the first Adam and officiates the union. In Revelation, God brings the bride, the New Jerusalem, to the second Adam, Christ the Son of God, and the marriage of the Lamb takes place. The story opens with a wedding in a garden and closes with a wedding in a city.

But in Genesis, man failed. The covenant was broken. The bride was deceived. Access to the tree of life was lost. In Revelation, the second Adam does not fail. The covenant is everlasting. The bride has been cleansed, adorned, and perfected. And the tree of life stands in the midst of the city, watered by the river that flows from the throne, its benefits flowing outward through the leaves to the nations. What was lost in the garden is restored in the city, not by returning to Eden, but by completing what Eden only foreshadowed.

God did not simply recreate Eden. He improved upon it. He built a system that could not fail. The priesthood is in place. The covenant is established. The pride has been removed. The bride is pure. And the tree of life stands in the midst of a city that is ordered, structured, and governed by the Lamb. The river flows, the tree bears fruit, the leaves heal the nations, and none of it depends on human effort. It depends on the faithfulness of God, who designed this from the beginning and brought it to completion through every obstacle that was thrown in His path.

## **The Abrahamic Promise Complete**

We began this book by examining the promise that God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3: *In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* We traced that promise through the Torah, the prophets, the writings, the gospels, and the apostolic letters. We watched it survive the rebellion at Sinai, the division of the kingdom, the bill of divorce, the exile, the centuries of Gentile domination, the crucifixion, and the tribulation. We watched it operate during the millennium as Israel functioned as the dew of the LORD among many peoples. And now, in the eternal state, we see it in its final and permanent form.

All families of the earth are blessed. The nations have eternal life. They walk in the light. They bring their glory. They receive healing from the leaves of the tree. They are not excluded from God's goodness. But the blessing comes through Israel. The river flows from the throne, through the city, to the nations. The tree stands in the city, and its leaves reach outward to heal. The light shines from the New Jerusalem, and the nations walk in it. Every blessing the nations receive is mediated through the covenant people, the bride, the Lamb's wife.

This is Genesis 12:3 in its ultimate and eternal expression. *In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* In Israel. Through Israel. By means of Israel. The channel was established four thousand years ago when God called Abraham. It was tested, strained, challenged, and attacked at every point. But it was never broken. It was never replaced. It was never transferred to another institution. And in the eternal state, it functions perfectly, permanently, without interruption, forever.

## **No More Curse**

Revelation 22:3 declares: *And there shall be no more curse.* This is the final word on the covenant curses that have occupied so

much of our attention in this book. The curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, which were enacted because of Israel's disobedience, which produced the exile, the scattering, the centuries of suffering, and the near-destruction of the covenant people, those curses are gone. Permanently. There shall be no more curse.

The curse was real. It was devastating. It was deserved. But it was never the final word. The curse was always a provision within the covenant, designed to drive Israel to repentance. And now, the repentance has come, the cleansing has been applied, the bride has been adorned, the marriage has taken place, and the curse is lifted forever. What remains is the throne of God and of the Lamb, the servants who serve Him, the face they see, the name they bear, and the reign that never ends.

Beginning at Moses, we can trace every thread. The promise to Abraham. The covenant at Sinai. The curses and the blessings. The exile and the return. The cross and the resurrection. The millennium and the eternal state. Every thread leads to this: a river flowing from the throne, a tree standing in the city, leaves reaching outward to the nations, and no more curse. The word of God did not return void. Every promise found its yes and amen.

### **Looking Ahead**

In the final chapter of this book, we will return to the place where everything began: the promise that still remains. The apostle, writing to the Hebrews, warned that the same gospel preached to us was preached to them, and it did not profit them because it was not mixed with faith. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. From Moses to the New Jerusalem, the promise of entering that rest has never been revoked. The question that remains is whether we will believe it.

*Chapter 21*

## **There Remains a Rest**

We have traced the biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation. We have followed the thread that begins with God's promise to Abraham, runs through the covenant at Sinai, survives the rebellion and scattering of Israel, endures the centuries of Gentile domination, and arrives at the millennial kingdom and the eternal state. We have seen the New Jerusalem descend from heaven, adorned for her husband. We have seen the nations walking in the light of the New Jerusalem. We have seen the river flowing from the throne, the tree of life bearing twelve fruits, and the leaves for the healing of the nations. We have seen every promise fulfilled. In Christ, all the promises of God are yes, and amen.

But this book would be incomplete if it ended as a mere theological survey. The narrative we have traced is not an academic exercise. It is the living word. And the question it puts to every reader is the same question it has put to every generation since Moses: do you believe it?

The apostle who wrote to the Hebrews understood this. He had walked through the same narrative, from Moses to Christ, from the wilderness to the promised land, from the covenant to the crucifixion. And having laid out the full scope of God's faithfulness,

he turned to his audience and said: be careful. The same gospel that was preached to you was preached to them. And it did not profit them, because it was not mixed with faith.

### **The Rest That Was Promised**

The argument of Hebrews 3 and 4 is one of the most carefully constructed passages in all of Scripture. The writer takes a single word, *rest*, and traces it from creation through the wilderness, through David, through the first century, and into the future. And his conclusion is devastating in its simplicity: the rest still remains. It has never been entered. And the only reason it has never been entered is unbelief.

He begins by quoting Psalm 95, where the Holy Spirit says through David:

*"For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved 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." (Psalm 95:7-11 KJV)*

God swore in His wrath: they shall not enter into my rest. The generation that came out of Egypt, that saw the miracles, that ate the manna, that stood at Sinai, that heard the voice of God, that was led by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, that generation was barred from the rest because they did not believe God's word. He promised them the land, and they did not believe Him. Caleb and Joshua believed, and they entered. The rest perished in the wilderness.

The Greek word that the apostle uses for rest is *katapausis*. It is a compound word: *kata*, meaning "in the manner of," and *pausis*, meaning "a ceasing, a repose." It denotes a ceasing from labour, a divine repose, a state of settled rest. This is what God offered to Israel. This is what they refused.

### **The Same Gospel**

The writer of Hebrews then makes a statement that should shake every believer to the core:

*"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." (Hebrews 4:2 KJV)*

The same gospel. The same good news. The same promise. There is not one gospel for ancient Israel and a different gospel for the church. The gospel that was preached to Israel in the wilderness is the same gospel that has been preached to us. The only difference is that their hearing of it was not mixed with faith. They heard the promise, but they did not believe it. They saw the land, but they did not trust God to give it to them. They looked at the giants in Canaan and concluded that God was a liar.

And the writer is saying to his audience, and, by extension, to us: be afraid. This is not a game. This is not theology for its own sake. This is the living word of the living God, and if the generation that stood at Sinai could fail because of unbelief, so can we. The promise is the same. The gospel is the same. The land is the same. The rest is the same. The risk is the same.

The only thing that has changed is the time and the people.

## **The Rest from Creation**

The writer then reaches all the way back to Genesis to show that the rest he is speaking of did not originate with Moses. It preceded Israel entirely. It preceded Abraham. It was established at the foundation of the world:

*"For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." (Hebrews 4:4 KJV)*

God Himself entered into *katapausis* on the seventh day. He ceased from His creative work. He entered into a state of divine repose. And the last thing He created before He rested was mankind. Adam and Eve were created on the sixth day, and the very first full day of their existence was the Sabbath, the day of God's rest. They were created *into* the rest. The rest was the intended state of human existence from the very beginning.

This is what the writer wants his readers to understand. The Sabbath is not merely a commandment. It is a foretaste. It is a weekly reminder of the divine rest that God established at creation and has been offering to His people ever since. When Israel kept the Sabbath, they were tasting the *katapausis* that God intended from the beginning. When we keep the Sabbath, we taste it now. We cease from our labour. We enter into fellowship with God. We experience, for one day in seven, the divine repose that will one day be permanent.

But the weekly Sabbath is only a foretaste. It is not the fullness. The fullness is what lies ahead.

## **If Joshua Had Given Them Rest**

The writer continues his argument with a logical precision that leaves no room for escape:

*"For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day." (Hebrews 4:8 KJV)*

The name mistranslated "Jesus" here is Joshua. The writer is saying: if Joshua had given them the *katapausis*, if the entry into the promised land under Joshua had been the fulfilment of the promise, then the Holy Spirit would not have inspired David, four hundred years later, to say *today, if ye will hear his voice*. The fact that David spoke of *another day* proves that the rest was not achieved under Joshua. The promise was still outstanding. The rest had not been entered.

Joshua led them into the land. They conquered cities. They divided the territory among the tribes. But the *katapausis* was never realized because the land was not fully subdued (*Joshua 13.1-6*). The rest that God intended from the foundation of the world was not simply a piece of real estate. It was a state of being. It was the divine repose that God Himself entered on the seventh day. And Israel, in all her centuries in the land, never achieved it. Because of unbelief. Because of idolatry. Because of the pride that was worse than Sodom's.

### **The Sabbatismos**

And then the writer arrives at the climax of his argument. Having traced the rest from creation through Moses, through Joshua, through David, he makes a declaration that gathers everything together:

*"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."  
(Hebrews 4:9 KJV)*

But here the writer does something remarkable. Throughout Hebrews 3 and 4, every time he uses the word rest, he uses the Greek *katapausis*. Every single time. Except here. In this one verse,

and only in this verse, he changes the word. He does not say *katapausis*. He says *sabbatismos*.

This word appears nowhere else in all of Scripture. It is used once, in this verse, and never again. The writer coined it, or at least chose it with extraordinary deliberation, because *katapausis* was not sufficient for what he wanted to say. *Katapausis* means a ceasing from labour, a divine repose. But *sabbatismos* takes the concept to a higher level. It is built from the word Sabbath, with the suffix *-ismos*, which indicates a system, an ongoing practice, a permanent state of being. It is not a single day of rest. It is an eternal Sabbath-keeping. It is a system of divine fellowship that is permanent, uninterrupted, and ongoing forever.

This is what remains. This is what the wilderness generation missed. This is what Joshua did not achieve. This is what David looked forward to. This is what the church tastes every seventh day when we enter into the Sabbath communion with God. And this is what will be fully and permanently realized when God's plan reaches its completion: not merely a cessation of work, but an eternal, divine, Sabbath-level relationship with God Himself, in the light of the New Jerusalem, with the river flowing from the throne and the tree of life bearing its twelve fruits.

The *sabbatismos* is the eternal state. It is the marriage of the Lamb. It is the bride adorned for her husband. It is God dwelling with His people. It is the promise that was made at creation, offered in the wilderness, carried forward through David, preached to the church, and fulfilled in the New Jerusalem. And it remains. It has never been withdrawn. It has never been cancelled. It has never been transferred to another people or reinterpreted into something other than what God plainly declared it to be.

## **Labour to Enter**

Having established that the rest still remains, the writer issues his final exhortation:

*"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (Hebrews 4:11 KJV)*

Labour to enter. This is not passive. This is not "sit back and wait for God to carry you in." This is active, deliberate, sustained effort. Study the word. Believe the word. Preach the word. Stand on the promises. Refuse to allow an evil heart of unbelief to creep into your theology. Do not dismiss what God's word plainly says because it does not fit your inherited assumptions.

And the reason for the urgency: *lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief*. The same example. The same pattern. The same failure. The wilderness generation heard the gospel and did not believe it. They saw the miracles and did not trust the One who performed them. They stood at the border of the promised land and concluded that the obstacles were greater than God's promise. And they perished.

The writer is saying: this can happen to you. It is not that it might happen in some theoretical, abstract sense. It has happened before, to the very people who were chosen by God, led by God, fed by God, protected by God. If it happened to them, it can happen to us. And the only thing that prevents it is faith. Believing God's word. Accepting what He has plainly said. Not hardening our hearts when His word confronts our assumptions.

## **The Word That Divides**

And then, immediately after this exhortation, the writer describes the instrument by which God tests whether our faith is genuine:

*"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4:12-13 KJV)*

The word of God is not inert text on a page. It is living. It is powerful. It is sharper than any two-edged sword. It divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow, thoughts from intentions. It sees everything. It exposes everything. There is no pretence before God. There is no Sabbath theatre. There is no church performance that can substitute for genuine faith in His word.

If we read the promises of God to Israel and dismiss them, the word sees it. If we teach that God has abandoned His covenant people, the word sees it. If we replace Israel with the church and spiritualize away the land and the kingdom and the priesthood, the word sees it. And we "have to do with Him". There is no avoiding the encounter. There is no escaping the judgment of the One whose word we either believe or reject.

But the passage does not end in fear. It ends in hope. Because we have a high priest:

*"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." (Hebrews 4:14 KJV)*

We have a great high priest. He has passed into the heavens. He is the Son of God. And because He is there, interceding for us, we can hold fast our profession. We can stand on the word. We can believe the promises. We can labour to enter the rest. Not in our own strength, but in the strength of the One who died to make the rest possible.

## **The Application of This Book**

This book has made a sustained argument from Genesis to Revelation that God's covenant with Israel is eternal, that His promises to the house of Israel have never been cancelled or transferred, and that the salvation of the Gentiles flows through Israel, not instead of Israel. Fundamentally, I am arguing that God is faithful to His word. We have traced the thread from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to the prophets, from the prophets to Christ, from Christ to the apostles, and from the apostles to the New Jerusalem. And we have found the same story at every point: God is faithful. His word does not return void. In Him, all the promises are yes, and amen.

But the purpose of this book is not merely to prove a theological point. The purpose is to call the reader to faith. The same faith that Caleb and Joshua had when they looked at the promised land and said, "We are well able to take it." The same faith that Nicodemus was groping toward when he came to Christ by night. The same faith that Paul described when he said, *For we which have believed do enter into rest* (Hebrews 4:3).

If God is faithful to Israel, then He will be faithful to you. If His covenant cannot be broken, then His promises to you cannot be broken. If He kept His word through centuries of rebellion, through exile, through the crucifixion, through the tribulation, and through the millennium, then He will keep His word to you. The rest still remains. The promise still stands. The gospel that was preached to Moses is the same gospel that is preached to you. And the only question is whether you will believe it.

## **Beginning at Moses**

We began this book with a courtroom. God was on trial. The accusation was that He had broken faith with His people. And the defence that Scripture offers, from Genesis to Revelation, is

comprehensive and unanswerable: God has never broken faith. Not once. Not with Israel. Not with the church. Not with any generation that has trusted His word.

The evidence began at Moses. Moses declared the scattering before Israel even entered the land. Moses declared the regathering. Moses declared the circumcision of the heart. Moses declared the second exodus. And every prophet who came after Moses confirmed what Moses said. The prophets did not invent new promises. They amplified the ones that Moses had already declared. Beginning at Moses, the narrative is one.

And Christ Himself, on the road to Emmaus, *beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself* (Luke 24:27). He did not begin with a new testament. He did not begin with a Gentile theology. He began at Moses. Because that is where the story begins. And from Moses, every thread leads forward, through the prophets, through the crucifixion, through the resurrection, through the millennium, to the New Jerusalem, where the bride is adorned, the nations walk in the light, the river flows from the throne, and God dwells with His people forever.

There remains therefore a *sabbatismos* for the people of God. The rest that was promised at creation, offered in the wilderness, carried forward through every generation, and preached to us in the gospel, that rest still stands. It has not been withdrawn. It has not been spiritualized into something other than what God said it would be. It is the eternal Sabbath, the divine fellowship, the permanent state of being that God designed for His people from the foundation of the world.

Let us labour to enter into that rest. Let us believe the word of God. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith. And let us say, with the full confidence of those who have traced every promise from its

origin to its fulfilment: in Him, all the promises of God are yes, and amen.

## *Conclusion*

# **The Triumphant Plan**

We opened this book in a courtroom. God was on trial. The accusation, brought by the adversary and echoed unwittingly by centuries of replacement theology, was that God had broken faith with His people. That He had made promises to Israel and failed to keep them. That the covenant was temporary, the land was symbolic, and the people were expendable. The charge, stripped of its theological disguise, was simple: God is a liar.

We have now examined the evidence. We have traced the narrative from Genesis to Revelation, beginning at Moses, following the thread through the prophets, the psalms, the gospels, and the apostolic letters, all the way to the New Jerusalem descending from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. We have examined the covenant at Sinai, the bill of divorce, the scattering, the hardening, the grafting, the second exodus, the regathering, the dry bones, the return of Christ, the millennium, the restoration of Sodom and Samaria, the strangers' inheritance, the dew of the LORD, the bride, the nations outside the city, the river, the tree, and the healing of the nations.

And the verdict is clear.

## **God Is True**

*"God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." (Romans 3:4 KJV)*

God is true. Every promise He made to Abraham has been kept. Every term of the covenant at Sinai has been honoured, both the blessings and the curses. Every prophecy spoken through Moses and confirmed by the prophets has found its fulfilment. The land was promised, and the land was given. The scattering was foretold, and the scattering took place. The regathering was declared, and the regathering will come. The new covenant was announced by Jeremiah, and it was inaugurated by the blood of Christ. The dry bones were shown to Ezekiel, and they will live. The bride was adorned in Ezekiel 16, and she descends in Revelation 21. From first to last, from Moses to the New Jerusalem, not one word has failed.

The adversary's case has collapsed. Every piece of evidence he entered has been answered. Every accusation has been refuted. Every generation that stood as a witness against God's faithfulness has been shown to be the faithless party, not God. Israel rebelled, and God kept covenant. The northern kingdom was divorced, and God found a legal way to remarry her through the death and resurrection of Christ. The southern kingdom was exiled, and God brought them back. The nations subjugated Jerusalem for centuries, and God used even the subjugation to accomplish His purposes. Nothing that man did, nothing that Satan orchestrated, nothing that the empires of this world imposed, was able to derail the plan that God set in motion when He called Abraham out of Ur.

*"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel (plan) shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:" (Isaiah 46:10 KJV)*

### **The Word Did Not Return Void**

*"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11 KJV)*

God's word accomplished what He pleased. It accomplished the election of Israel. It accomplished the covenant at Sinai. It accomplished the scattering and the regathering. It accomplished the crucifixion and the resurrection. It accomplished the outpouring of the Spirit. It accomplished the grafting of the Gentiles into the olive tree. It will accomplish the second exodus. It will accomplish the millennial kingdom. It will accomplish the general resurrection. It will accomplish the marriage of the Lamb. And it will accomplish the eternal state, in which the river flows from the throne through the city, the tree of life bears twelve fruits, and the leaves heal the nations.

Not one word returned void. Not one promise was broken. Not one covenant was abandoned. In Him, all the promises of God are yes, and amen.

### **The Channel Intact**

From beginning to end, the mechanism has never changed. God chose Abraham. He promised that in Abraham's seed, all families of the earth would be blessed. He established Israel as the kingdom of priests through whom His blessing would reach the nations. He placed His name in Jerusalem. He gave the Torah, the temple, the sacrificial system, and the prophets. He sent His Son, born of a Jewish mother, circumcised on the eighth day, raised under the law,

preaching to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He sent Jewish apostles to carry the gospel to the Gentiles. He grafted the Gentile believers into Israel's olive tree. And in the eternal state, the nations walk in the light of the New Jerusalem, a city with twelve gates named after the twelve tribes of Israel and twelve foundations named after twelve Jewish apostles.

The channel was never replaced. The mechanism was never transferred. The church did not supersede Israel. The Gentile believers were brought into Israel's story, not given a story of their own. And the nations who will live forever in the light of the New Jerusalem will receive their blessing through the city, through the covenant people, through the bride. Israel mediates. The Gentiles receive. This was the plan in Genesis 12. This is the plan in Revelation 22. And this will be the plan forever.

### **The Lesson of the Narrative**

If God is faithful to Israel, then He is faithful. If His promises to a stiff-necked, rebellious, idolatrous people cannot be voided by their sin, then no promise of His can be voided by any sin. If His covenant survives the golden calf, the divided kingdom, the bill of divorce, the exile, the destruction of the temple, the rejection of the Messiah, and two thousand years of scattering, then His covenant survives everything. There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. There is no accusation that can stand. There is no failure that can exhaust His mercy. There is no rebellion that can outlast His patience.

This is the gospel. Not merely that Christ died for our sins, though He did. Not merely that we are saved by grace through faith, though we are. The gospel is that God made promises, and He keeps them. All of them. To everyone He made them to. Through the mechanism He established. In the order He determined. Without

exception, without revision, and without apology. No matter what the bad news is, the good news supersedes it.

The gospel is that God is true.

### **The Question That Remains**

We asked in Chapter 1 whether Moses, if he were resurrected today, would recognize the gospel we are preaching. Having traced the narrative from his writings to its conclusion, the question is no longer hypothetical. We know what Moses preached. We know what the prophets confirmed. We know what Christ fulfilled. We know what the apostles taught. And we know what the book of Revelation reveals about the eternal state.

The question is whether the gospel we preach aligns with the gospel that was preached to them. The same promise. The same land. The same covenant. The same people. The same rest. If it does, then we stand in the line that stretches from Moses to the New Jerusalem, and we can say with confidence: in Him, all the promises of God are yes, and amen.

If it doesn't, then the warning of Hebrews still echoes: *lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*

### **The Final Word**

The Bible tells one story. It is the story of a God who chose a people, bound Himself to them by oath, endured their rebellion, bore their punishment, and brought them through every trial to the glorious destiny He had planned from the foundation of the world. Along the way, He opened a door for the nations to be blessed through the people He chose. He grafted some of them in. He gave some of them a share in the inheritance. He promised all of them eternal life. And He will heal them forever with the leaves of the tree that stands in the city of His bride.

But the bride is Israel. The city is Jerusalem. The gates bear the names of the twelve tribes. The foundations bear the names of the twelve apostles. The river flows from the throne through the city. The light shines from God's presence among His covenant people. And the nations walk in that light, bringing their glory and honour into the city whose builder and maker is God.

This is the triumphant plan. This is the narrative that begins at Moses and ends in the eternal state. This is the story that the Bible tells, from first to last, without contradiction, without deviation, and without apology. God chose Israel. God kept covenant. God fulfilled every promise. And in the end, the whole earth is blessed, through Israel, under Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

Let God be true, and every man a liar.

In Him, all the promises of God are yes, and amen.

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*If Moses were resurrected today, would he recognize the gospel we are preaching?*

*When Christ rose from the dead and opened the Scriptures to His disciples, He didn't start fresh. He began at Moses (Luke 24:27). He revealed what was there all along.*

*What gospel are we preaching? Does it match the one that was proclaimed from the beginning?*

*"For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it."*

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Hebrews 4:2

*"As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."*

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Galatians 1:8-9

Adrian Davis was baptized into the body of Jesus Christ in 1986 and ordained an Elder in 2013.

He has pastored the congregation he helped co-found since his ordination and has given hundreds of sermons across Canada and around the world proclaiming the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

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