

# Six Works of God

## Each Accomplished Over Three Manifestations

By Jeff and Cole Ahrendt – Happy Home Community Church, 2018--2022

### *Coming, Calling, Cleansing, Collecting, Constructing, Creating*

*“How great are Thy works, O LORD!”* Psalm 92:5\*

When considering the “works of God”, one may be drawn to the passage in which the multitude asked of Jesus, “What shall we do, that we may **work the works of God?**” (John 6:28). Many are the works of God that man may do, from bringing contributions for the ancient tabernacle – “and everyone whose spirit moved him came and brought the LORD’s contribution for the work of the tent of meeting and for all its service” (Ex 35:21) -- to doing “good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10) as believers in Christ, in order to, as James wrote, “show... my faith by my works,” (James 2:18); works such as “show(ing) hospitality to strangers,... assist(ing) those in distress... be(ing) generous and ready to share...” (1 Tim 5:10; 6:18). The good works men may do are too numerous to list here, yet Paul summarized them to Timothy: “Deeds that are good are quite evident...” 1 Tim 5:25.

But this study is not exploring any of those types of works that man may do in doing a work of God, as interesting a study as that may be. No, this study is exploring just those works that God himself performs, as described in Scripture, in his dealings with man and for man, which, as we shall see, is ultimately to demonstrate to the world his own glory.

This study is about God’s Major Works, in the sense of what can be recognized as his purposeful actions towards the ultimate goals laid out in the narrative of the totality of Scripture: for example, to redeem man, to restore Israel to the Land, to claim Earth as his kingdom, to secure a bride for his Son.

There are certainly a multitude of individual miraculous works of his that support those prime goals, such as his handiwork in engraving the stone tablets of the Law of Moses: “The two tablets of the testimony... **were God’s work**, and the writing was God’s writing engraved on the tablets,” Ex 32:15,16. These are of the nature of the miracles God performed in Egypt, the ultimate goal of which was to bring Israel out of captivity and back to the Land: “I will stretch out my hand, and strike Egypt with all my miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that (Pharaoh) will let you go,” Ex 3:20.

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God declared to Moses what was the purpose of the miracles: “Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God... And **I will bring you to the land** which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD,’” Ex 6:6-8.

They were performed for the ultimate work of securing Israel to the Promised Land, as God told Moses: “Before all your people **I will perform miracles** which have not been produced in all the earth, nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the **working of the LORD**, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you... Behold, I am going to drive out...nations before you and enlarge your borders,” Ex 34:10,11,24.

These miraculous works and many others then collectively form what can be identified as one of the major works of God, to be accomplished through their working: the Work of God in Gathering Israel back to the Land; in short, the Work of Collecting:

### ***Collecting (the Gathering of Israel Back to the Land)***

But even this major work of bringing Israel back to the Land, brought about through myriad miracles, was for the overarching purpose of demonstrating God’s power and mercy among “all the earth,.. among...the nations,... and all the people...” Of all the major works to be explored here – concatenated into Six Major Works for the purpose of providing a supporting structure to the study – ultimately all of them are to demonstrate to mankind God’s great power, as well as his love, mercy and grace.

It was the reason God empowered King Cyrus to “subdue nations before him”: “I have given you a title of honor though you have not known Me... I will gird you... **that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me.** I am the LORD, and there is no other. The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these,” Is 45:1,4-7.

This Work of God in bringing Israel back to the Land, however, did not end with the one exhausting trip out of Egypt. Two more times God would perform his Work of Gathering Israel in order to bring them back, as summarized by the prophet Jeremiah: “Behold, the days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when they will no longer say, “As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,” but, “As the LORD lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from the north land, and from all the countries where I had driven them,”’ Jer 23:7-8.

We read that after he brought them out of Egypt, God eventually punished Israel by sending them into exile into Babylon, and that he explicitly promised to bring them back from there again: “When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place,” Jer 29:10.

But the prophets also foretold of a time when God would “scatter them among (all) the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send a sword after them until I have (*almost*) annihilated them,” (Jer 9:16; see Jer 5:18,19, 30:11, 32:42).

Four hundred years after Israel returned from Babylon, Jesus spoke of this coming judgment as he was about to enter Jerusalem: “When (Jesus) approached, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation,’” Luke 19:41-44.

Jesus described the Jews’ coming *diaspora* (*dispersion*) as he continued his prophecy: “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, recognize that her desolation is at hand... Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive **into all the nations**; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles,” Luke 21:20-24.

Moses foretold this same scattering as well: “When you (Israel) become the father of children and children’s children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly,... you shall surely perish...from the land... And the LORD will **scatter you among the peoples**, and you shall be left few in number **among the nations**, where the LORD shall drive you,” Deut 4:25-27.

As always, however, the promise is given that God will gather them back: “So it shall become when all of these things have come upon you,...and you call them to mind in **all nations** where the LORD your God has banished you, and you return to the LORD your God,... then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from **all the peoples** where the LORD your God has scattered you,” Deut 30:1-3.

That promise is repeated by Isaiah, in effect declaring a third time God will bring them back: “But now, thus says the LORD, your creator, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!... For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;... Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, “Give them up!” And to the south, “Do not hold them back.” Bring my

sons from afar, and My daughters **from the ends of the earth**, every one who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made,” Is 43:1-7.

So we discover that this work of God in bringing Israel back to the Land is accomplished over three separate manifestations: from out of Egypt, from out of Babylon, and from out of all the nations of the earth. Why does God perform his Work over three manifestations? Because the number Three is a reflection of his very nature as a triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. His Works are manifest over three ways because each major work serves the greater purpose of manifesting himself to the world, so that “men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other.”

### **It is His Signature: The Works of God are Manifest Over Three Ways. The number Three can then be said to reflect the Works of God.**

An integral part of God’s plan to secure Israel onto the Land is to have a temple constructed at a central place within their midst, so that they might obey all the commandments and be blessed in the Land: “These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth... You shall seek the LORD at the place which the LORD your God shall choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come, and there you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock,” Deut 12:1-6.

The construction of the permanent earthly temple, a building God called “a house for My name” (2 Sam 7:13), was a work God told David a chosen son of his was to perform: “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. **He shall build a house for My name**, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever. I will be a father to Him and he will be a Son to Me,” (2 Sam 7:12-14).

This chosen Son of David is Jesus, the Son of God, and the “house for (God’s) name” that He shall build is the temple described by the prophet Ezekiel: “Behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east... And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east... Then I heard one speaking to me from the house, while a man was standing beside me. And He said to

me, 'Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever... As for you, son of man, describe (this) temple to the house of Israel... This is the law of the house: its entire area on the top of the mountain all around shall be most holy,'" Ezek 43:2,4-7,10.

Zechariah prophesied about this day: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and **He will build the temple of the LORD**. Yes, **it is He who will build the temple of the LORD**, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne,'" Zech 6:12-13.

What is interesting is that there will have been two previous manifestations of this final earthly temple built by the Branch: the first one, the one that the son of David, Solomon, built based on the tabernacle of Moses, and which was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:8-21); and a second one built by Zerubbabel and rebuilt by Herod, which was destroyed according to Jesus' own prophecy (Mark 13:2). This third one that the Lord re-builds must first exist at the "time of the end" (Dan 8:19), during the "great tribulation" that Jesus warned about (Matt 24:21), when the "abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, (would be) standing in the holy place," (Matt 24:15), that is, in the temple ("And forces from [the king of the North] will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice; and they will set up the abomination of desolation," Dan 11:31).

So even in the constructing of the earthly temple, there are three manifestations of that house; they reflect the Work of God in Constructing:

### ***Constructing (the Building of the Earthly Temple)***

When we think of the works of God, we may also think of the many works of Jesus in miraculously healing, and raising the dead. Yet as Jesus himself said, "I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, (but) the third day I reach **my goal**," Luke 13:32. So the miracles were not a means unto themselves, rather, they were meant to manifest Jesus to the world: "The works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do, **bear witness** of Me, that **the Father has sent Me**," John 5:36.

When the disciples asked Jesus about a blind man – "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" – Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that **the works of God might be displayed** in him. We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work," John 9:1-4. Jesus then healed the blind beggar, and finding him later, told him, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind," John 9:39.

There was a monumental work Jesus came to accomplish, beyond the many miracles of healing, as he told his disciples: “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and **all things** which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man **will be accomplished**. For He will be delivered up to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged him, **they will kill him; and the third day he will rise again**,” Luke 18:31-33. That was the ultimate work Jesus was to work, with the many miracles he performed the proof that he was who he said he was. They comprised the stamp of his authority, having come from the Father, God in Heaven.

As Jesus said, “I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. and this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that every one who beholds the Son, and believes in Him, **may have eternal life**; and I Myself will **raise him up** on the last day,” John 6:38-40.

Two major works of God to be accomplished through Jesus are suggested here in his statement: to grant eternal life to those who believe in Him, and to make possible that eternal life by performing a resurrection of those who believe. The great works of Redeeming the Lost, and Resurrecting the Righteous Dead.

When we first contemplate – what are the works of God? – we may be inclined to immediately think of these works, Christ’s major work of redemption on the cross, and the resurrection to follow: “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work,” John 4:34. As Jesus said, “The Father loves Me, because **I lay down My life**, that **I may take it (up) again**,” John 10:17.

We certainly see that the Son of Man “**has come to seek and to save that which was lost**” (Luke 19:10), accomplished by his work on the cross, and we see his intention to “**raise (those who believe) up on the last day**,” (John 6:54), but we also remember His words to the twelve: “I go to prepare a place for you... And if I go,..I will **come again**, and **receive you** to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also,” John 14:3. So while Jesus **came the first time** to “lay down his life for his friends,” John 15:13, he said he **will come a second time** to “receive (them) to (Him)self.” If one ascribes to a literal reading, one might refer to this second coming as the Rapture (“*to be caught up*” – *1 Thess 4:17*), the moment when Jesus the Bridegroom comes to receive his waiting Bride (Matt 25:10; John 3:29), the Church (Eph 5:22-32), and carry her away to His Father’s House (John 14:1-3) for a joyous wedding feast (Rev 19:7,9).

Yet Jesus said that “**all things**” which were written about Him “will be accomplished.” That, of course, if taken literally, must also include Jesus’ coming in fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy: “For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, **so shall the coming of the Son of Man be**... All the tribes of the earth... will see the **Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory**...” Matt

24:27,30. This Jesus spoke in answer to his disciples' question, "Tell us,... what will be the **sign of Your coming**, and of the end of the age?" (John 24:3).

That coming is when God "shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He **will reign as king** and act wisely and do justice and righteousness **in the land**. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely," (Jer 23:5,6). It is when the "King of kings and LORD of lords" comes to "smite the nations and... rule them with a rod of iron,... tread(ing) the wine press of the fierce wrath of God," (Rev 19:16,15).

So, in a literal reading of the Bible, Christ comes not just once, not just twice, but **three times** – the '**coming of the Son of Man**' to perform his works is accomplished over three manifestations! First to Redeem, then to Rapture, and finally, to Restore the kingdom: "And behold, with the clouds of heaven **One like a Son of Man was coming**, And He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed," Daniel 7:13,14. They, combined, comprise the Work of His Coming:

### ***Coming (the Appearing of the Son of Man)***

Just as the Work of Collecting Israel to the Land and the Work of the Coming of the Son of Man are both accomplished over three manifestations, so the Work Jesus performs in Resurrecting the Righteous Dead is also described by Paul as to be accomplished over three events – "In Christ all shall be made alive; but **each in his own order**: [1.] Christ the first fruits, after that, [2.] those who are Christ's at his coming, then, [3.] (at) the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power," 1 Cor 15:22-24.

Jesus calls the dead from out of the grave, just as he did to Lazarus: "(Jesus) **cried out with a loud voice**, 'Lazarus, come forth,'" (John 11:43). When "we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together... in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air," it will be "**with a shout**" that "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven," and with that shout, raise "the dead in Christ," (1 Thess 4:17,16). So Jesus raises the righteous dead by calling them from out of the grave – the resurrection is the Work of Calling:

### ***Calling (the Resurrection of the Righteous Dead)***

David cried out to the Lord, “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin,” Psalm 51:2. To be pardoned, forgiven, cleansed of sin, is an essential component of the effective work of Christ on the cross, as we call on his name in repentance. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a (right) spirit within me,” David prayed (Psalm 51:10). Jesus told his disciples, “He who has bathed... is completely clean; and you are clean,” (John 13:10). This “bath” Jesus was referring to is the cleansing of salvation, in which, as David poetically states it, “as far as the east is from the west, so far has (God) removed our transgressions from us,” (Psalm 103:12). To be cleansed of sin is why David cried, “Purify me with (the) hyssop [*dipped in blood – Ex 12:22*], and I shall be clean; **wash me**, and I shall be whiter than snow,” (Psalm 51:7).

Beyond the purifying of sins unto salvation – the forgiveness of redemption – there is another purification that Christ performs, as he resurrects his dead saints and at the same time transforms those who are alive at his coming, as Paul reveals – “I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,...for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality,” 1 Cor 15:51, 52. This occurs when Christ “present(s) to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but...she...(will) be holy and blameless,” Eph 5:27. As The Living One said to John, “He who overcomes shall...be clothed in white garments,” (Rev 3:5).

First, at the moment of calling on his name in faith, Christ cleanses us of sin unto salvation; second, at the moment of his coming he cleanses us unto glorification. There is a third type of cleansing Christ does for his saints, and that is the washing he performs daily as we walk in his light – the cleansing of the foot washing of our sins unto fellowship; as Jesus told his disciples: “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet,” John 13:10.

The Work of Washing of Sins Christ performs for his saints is accomplished over three manifestations. It is his Work of Cleansing:

### ***Cleansing (the Washing of the Saints)***

It is quite likely that when we think about the works of God, we might first think of God’s work of creating the heavens and the earth: “In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed,” Ex 31:17. Scripture declares this creative work as the “work of His hands”: “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring **the work of His hands**,” (Psalm 19:1).



The Psalms especially express the wonder of God's works: "I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Thy works," Ps 139:14.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," Gen 1:1. With these words so begins the book, the Bible. Turning to the end of the book, to Revelation 21, we read similar words: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away... And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new,'" Rev 21:1,5.

And so He declares, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end," (Rev 22:13), a triune statement as the signature of a triune God – "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD, God, the Almighty, Who Was, and Who Is, and Who Is to Come," Rev 4:8. "The living creatures give glory, and honor, and thanks to Him Who Sits on the Throne,... (and) the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him..., saying, 'Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created,'" Rev 4:9-11.

God's Work of Creating:

### ***Creating (the Making of the Heavens and the Earth)***

The six days of creation recounted in Genesis chapter 1 influenced the numbered structure for this study: The Six Works of God – Coming, Calling, Cleansing, Collecting, Constructing, Creating.

The seventh day is when God "rested from all His work which He had done," (Gen 2:1), and that becomes a prophetic image of the eternal peace found in the new heavens and new earth: "For behold, I create a new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create [a new] Jerusalem for rejoicing, and her people for gladness... Be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her, all you who love her; be exceedingly glad with her, all you who mourn over her, that you may nurse and be satisfied,... For thus says the LORD, '**Behold, I extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall be nursed, you shall be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem,**'" Is 65:17,18; 66:10-13.

# Six Works of God

## I. He Comes (in the Appearing of the Son of Man)

A major theme of the Jewish prophets is the coming of the promised descendant of David – “Behold, the days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely,” Jer 23:5,6. “My people,... I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD... And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd,” Ezek 37:12,13,24

This coming king will be like his father David, a shepherd, a ruler who brings peace, born in Bethlehem, and who is also to be recognized as the Lord God himself: “Behold, the LORD is coming forth from His place... I will surely gather the remnant of Israel... Like...a flock in the midst of its pasture they will be noisy with men... Their King goes on before them, and the LORD (is) at their head... It will come about in the last days that the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains... And the peoples will stream to it... ‘In that day,’ declares the LORD, ‘I will... make the lame a remnant, and the outcasts a strong nation, and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and forever... As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are (appointed) from long ago, from the days of eternity’... He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God... At that time He will be great to the ends of the earth. And this One will be our peace,” Micah 1:3; 2:12,13; 4:1,6,7; 5:2,4,5.

The prophecy of his coming was one of the last oracles written in the Hebrew scriptures: “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, (even) the Messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight; Behold, He is coming,’ says the LORD of Hosts,” Mal 3:1. That passage is similar to the very last message of the Greek scriptures as well: “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me’... He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming quickly,’” Rev 22:12,20.

So the coming of the Son of David (2 Sam 7:12), the “Son of Man” (Dan 7:13), the “Anointed (One)” (Psalm 2:2), called “Messiah” (Dan 9:25), was a major expectation of the Jews for four hundred years following Malachi’s last prophetic oracle.

What the Jews were expecting of this coming Lord was a victorious warrior king – “**The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst... Do not be afraid, O Zion... The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior,**” Zeph 3:15,17. “Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle... **Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations,** as when He fights on a day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand

on the Mount of Olives... Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!... And **the LORD will be king over all the earth**... There will be no more curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security,” Zech 14:1-5,9,11.

What the people of Jesus’ day had difficulty with, or simply chose to ignore, or re-interpreted as allegory, were the prophecies of the Messiah, God’s “Servant”, suffering and dying: “Behold, My Servant will... be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted. [But] just as many were astonished at you, My people, so His appearance was marred more than any man... He was despised, and we did not esteem Him... He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open his mouth, like a lamb that is led to slaughter... As for His generation, who [among them] considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of My people, to whom the stroke was due?” Isaiah 52:13,14; 53:3,7,8.

Having greatly anticipated the arrival of the “Son of David”, and accepting Jesus as such (Matt 21:9), the common people could certainly understand this declaration of his: “Just as the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day,” Luke 17:24, since it was a reference to Zechariah’s vision of the coming king: “Behold, your king is coming to you,...Then the LORD will appear over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning,” Zech 9:9,14. What was difficult to accept was this statement of his: “But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation,” vs25.

Even Jesus’ disciples could not comprehend the disturbing part of the prophecies, despite his telling them directly what would happen: “‘Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.’ But they did not understand this statement,” Luke 9:44,45. He stated the prophecy of his suffering even more bluntly: “‘Behold, we are going to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished – for He will be delivered up to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again.’ And they understood none of these things,” Luke 18:31-33.

In hindsight, it is possible to reconcile the paradox of the prophecies, his coming in power and glory to set up his kingdom, and his coming to suffer and be rejected and killed, by simply recognizing and accepting he comes not just once, but at least twice.

Since the Jews “supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately” (Luke 19:11), Jesus explained the two comings, using parables: “Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight. Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks... Whether he comes in the second watch, or even the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves... Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect,” Luke 12:35-40. Since He was already there, having already come, this coming would be a coming back, a return, a ‘second’ coming.

In the same way the Jews of Jesus' day had difficulty accepting a literal reading of the prophecies of the suffering of God's Servant (Is 53), and of Messiah being "cut off" so he has "nothing" (Dan 9:26), likewise many Christians of our day have rejected the notion of a literal second coming of Jesus to rule as a king over all the earth from Jerusalem, with Israel a restored physical kingdom, as we read from a Preterist web blog –

*“The second coming of Jesus Christ was totally fulfilled in the first century. (It) had to do with bringing an end to the Jewish Age and the establishment of Christ's Kingdom (the Christian Era).[...]*

*“The end of the world that Jesus was talking [about] referred to the end of the age, not the end of the physical world. [...]*

*“God... is [finished] with Israel as a nation... Their ultimate disobedience in their rejection of Christ would forfeit them any claim to the land. [...]*  
*[T]here is no promise concerning the land that still awaits any fulfillment. [...]*  
*God's unconditional promises in the Old Testament were not made to national Israel but to...believers in Christ... Therefore, the promises made...are fulfilled now by the Christian Church... As for national Israel, God had brought it to a permanent end... [W]e are now living in the new heavens and new earth...*

*“Christ's Kingdom has always been spiritual, not political... Christ rules spiritually in the hearts of men... Almost all evangelical Christians today have absolutely no deep understanding of Christian doctrine, theology, [or] Scripture, including prophecy!... They're looking for a literal... Kingdom like the disciples in Jesus' day thought He would establish. [...]*

*“Modern Israel has nothing to do with Bible prophecy or Scripture. [...]*

*“This view that Christ's second coming occurred in 70 AD... is known as Preterist (or fulfilled) eschatology.”*

-- Excerpts from SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND RAPTURE MISUNDERSTOOD by Babu G. Ranganathan, June 12, 2014 –  
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140612114310-117953348-second-coming-of-christ-misunderstood>

This preterist view of prophecy developed out of a rejection of premillennialism (the belief that the 1,000 year reign of Christ is a future literal reality) by Augustine<sup>1</sup>. It was not until the rise of fundamentalism in America around the turn of the last century that a literal interpretation of the Bible had been once again promoted and encouraged, since the days of Jesus' disciples, as a legitimate way of reading the words of Scripture, especially the prophecies.

To read prophecy literally is to make every word of the Bible meaningful, and truly understandable to potentially anyone: it says what it means, and means what it says. To read prophecy, as the above author asserts in his web blog is the correct way, that is,

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<sup>1</sup> John F. Walvoord <https://bible.org/seriespage/4-amillennialism-augustine-modern-times>

“symbolically” – (he actually means ‘allegorically’), – is to render the bulk of prophecy meaningless, unless it is dealing strictly with the fulfillment of Christ’s first coming, in which case, all is fulfilled literally, and physically (“They pierced my hands and my feet... and for my clothing they cast lots,” Psalm 22:16,18 – see *Luke 24:39; John 19:24*).

There is one statement of the Preterist author that would perhaps be agreed to by a literal fundamentalist, although they each would be pointing at the other while saying it:

*“Just as the Jews of Jesus’ day wrongly understood His first coming, Christians of today wrongly understand what Scripture means by His second coming.”*

Each Christian today, if confronted with these polar opposite ways of reading Scripture prophecy, must choose between them, or may simply abandon reading huge swaths of Scripture in order to avoid the conflict.

For purposes of this study, however, we will continue to follow along the path of the literal understanding of all of Scripture, especially of the prophets. Otherwise, there may be little to study. But as Paul told Timothy, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching,” (2 Tim 3:16).

## ***The Son of Man Comes...***

### ***FIRST: As a Lamb to Redeem, Reconcile and Reckon Righteous the Lost through Sacrifice***

The Lord is called Israel's "Redeemer" and "Savior" – "A Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression," Is 59:20; "You will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob," Is 60:16.

God clearly tells Israel from what they need saving: "The LORD's hand is not so short that it cannot save, neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear, **but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you**, so that he does not hear," Is 59:1-2.

Four hundred years later, Paul wrote to the Jews and Gentiles in Rome this same message, quoting Psalm 14: "There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks...God; all have turned aside'... **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**," Rom 2:10-12; 3:23.

God tells Israel how to be saved from this separation caused by sin: "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon... You will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am,'" Is 55:6,7; 58:9.

Paul repeated these same words of salvation to the Romans: "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for [quoting Joel 2:32] '**Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved**,'" Rom 10:12,13.

Isaiah intimated calling involves confessing: "Our transgressions are multiplied before Thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities: transgressing and denying the LORD, and turning away from our God," Is 59:12,13. David confessed: "I acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'; and Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin," Ps 32:5. And the Apostle John explicitly concurred: "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves... (but) if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," John 1:8,9.

Yet in the times he was speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God "saw that there was no man, astonished that there was no one, to intercede," (Is 59:16). His solution was to provide his own intercessor: "Then His own arm brought salvation to Him; and His

righteousness upheld Him. And He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head..." Is 59:16,17.

This was the promise God made to Israel of the coming of the Redeemer Savior: "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you... His glory will appear upon you, and nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising," Is 60:1-3. "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My Chosen One in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations... I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, and I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, and those who dwell in darkness from the prison," Is 42:1,6,7.

This promise of a Redeemer was not only to Israel, but to Gentiles as well, as the Servant himself declared through Isaiah: "And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, in order that Israel might be gathered to Him... He says [of Me], 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up [only] the tribes of Jacob, and to restore [only] the preserved ones of Israel -- **I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth!**' Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and its Holy One... Princes shall also bow down because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You," Is 49:5-7.

When Jesus was born, Paul confirmed to the Jews and those Gentiles "who fear God" in Antioch that **Jesus was the promised Savior**: "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and led them out from (Egypt)... He raised up David to be their king,... From the offspring of this man, according to promise, **God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus**... Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the word of this salvation is sent out... Let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things... For thus the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should bring salvation to the end of the earth,'" Acts 13:16-47 (*excerpts*).

As John the Baptist's father, Zacharias, prophesied just before the birth of Jesus, speaking as if the work of his salvation had already been accomplished, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited us and accomplished redemption for his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David his servant," Luke 1:67-69.

This is the same message of good news brought to the Gentiles by Paul, writing to his disciple Titus, following the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus: "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,... our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus...gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession... When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds we have done...,

but according to His mercy...through Jesus Christ our Savior, ...being justified by His grace," Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7.

As Jesus said of his first coming, "I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world," Jn 12:47. This was the Work he had been sent to do: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work," Jn 4:34.

## **To Redeem**

To redeem someone is to buy him back, after he has been sold into slavery, and then set him free; it is to count the cost, and pay the full price for freedom. To redeem, is to save that one from a life of condemnation and torment that comes from that enslavement. Paul wrote, "The wages of sin is death..." (Rom 6:23). As Savior, Jesus redeems us from the curse of sin, and frees us from condemnation unto eternal death by the forgiveness of our guilt.

But by what action was Jesus able to accomplish the work of redemption from sins, and salvation from sin's condemnation? It was through his suffering on the cross. As Isaiah stated: "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; but He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening for our well being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall upon Him," Is 53:4-6.

The Work of Redemption was through the shedding of his blood: "According to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness... But when Christ appeared..., He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle,.. not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood,... once for all, having obtained eternal redemption," Heb 9:22,11,12.

As the writer of the book of Hebrews, most likely Paul, wrote: "At the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself... Christ (was)...offered once to bear the sins of many..., having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time," Heb 9:26,28; 10:12.

And as Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us," Eph 1:7,8. And as John confirmed: "Jesus Christ... released us from our sins by His blood," Rev 1:5. In short, "Christ died for our sins," 1 Cor 15:3.

Jesus came as a Lamb, our Passover. Zacharias' son, John the Baptist, saw Jesus "coming to him, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" John 1:29. As Peter declared, "Know() that you were... redeemed... with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:19), for "Christ (is) our Passover (who) has been sacrificed," (1 Cor 5:7) Paul wrote.



This was the prophecy of Isaiah, who wrote of the coming Servant, “He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth,” Is 53:7.

## To Reconcile

Sin has “made a separation between you and your God,” (Is 59:2) and “all of us like sheep have gone astray,” (Is 53:6), but Jesus came to “seek and to save that which was lost,” Luke 19:10. To be separated, like a child from its mother, is a sad state. To be restored back into that relationship is a joyful event. Like a father and son not speaking to each other because of hurt and anger, there is separation, but when the moment forgiveness comes, and they are restored in their relationship, that is reconciliation, and it can be a time of celebration.

That is how it is when we are reconciled to the Father: “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us... For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, (even) more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life; and not only this, but we also exult [*celebrate*] in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation,” Rom 5:8-11

Since God “is the Savior (for) all men,” 1 Tim 4:10, the question then is, how does each one of us attain this redemption and reconciliation for ourselves? It is the calling on him – as Joel prophesied, “Whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered,” Joel 2:32. That calling on God for mercy is a manifestation of our faith, a belief that what God offers is true. Jesus declared, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life,” John 3:14,15.

It is the same faith the Hebrew saints expressed – “By (faith) the men of old gained approval... By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous... By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death... for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and He is a rewarder of those who seek Him... Jacob... Joseph... Moses... Rahab... What more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Japhthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword... And all these... gained approval through their faith,” Heb 11:1-39 (*excerpts*).

It was the faith of Phinehas the priest, as David recounted: “Then Phinehas stood up and interposed; and so the plague was stayed. And it was reckoned to him for righteousness, to all generations forever,” Psalm 106:30,31.

## To Reckon Righteous

The faith we express in Jesus, believing in him that he is Lord and that he died for us on the cross and that God raised him from the dead, is the same faith Abraham had, as Paul instructed: “For what does the Scripture say? ‘And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,’” Rom 4:3. What was it that Abraham believed? He believed God’s promise to him: “Then behold, the word of the LORD came to (Abram), saying, ‘...One who shall come forth from your own body... shall be your heir... Count the stars, if you are able to count them... So shall your descendants be.’ Then he believed in the LORD; and (God) reckoned it to him as righteousness,” Gen 15:4-6.

Paul was making the argument that if “faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness” (Rom 4:9) “with respect to the promise of God” (v 20) that “in hope against hope he believed...that he might become the father of many nations” (v 18), then it was written “for our sake also, to whom (righteousness) will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification,” (vs 24,25).

Because of the fundamental truth from the beginning of time that “whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10:13), Paul argues that “the righteousness of God has been manifested... through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe (in Him), for there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (but all who believe are) being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith,” Rom 3:21-25. That is why Paul concludes, “now... to the one who... believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness,” Rom 4:3.

We are not transformed into a state of perfect sinlessness by our faith (1 John 1:8; Phl 3:12), rather we are *reckoned, accounted, declared* righteous; we are sinners forgiven, set free and declared innocent – *justified* [*‘just-as-if-I’d never sinned’*] – of all legitimate charges against us relative to condemnation: “Who shall set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God (I am set free) through Jesus Christ our Lord!...There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For... the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set you free from... sin and death,” Rom 7:24,25; 8:1,2. For “God...reconcil(ed) the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them...(So) we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God,” 2 Cor 5:18-20.

The Son of Man comes, first, to redeem, reconcile and reckon righteousness to those who believe, as a Lamb through the Work of Sacrifice: “And they sang the...song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and Marvelous are Your Works, O Lord, God, the Almighty,’” Rev 15:3.

## ***The Son of Man Comes...***

### **SECOND: As a Bridegroom to Receive, Rejoice Over and Reside With His Bride through Marriage**

Today we can look back at Jesus' first coming and, because of what we read in the completed historical narrative of scripture, say definitively: "Jesus' intention all along was to come to die on the cross, and then return to his Father." In the same way, John was able to transcribe his introduction to the night of the Last Supper from a similar hindsight, when he wrote: "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus (knew) that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father... (Having) come forth from God, (He) was going back to God..." John 13:1,3. What John relayed here in Chapter 13 of his gospel should have come with a spoiler alert, since it wasn't until the next chapter, Chapter 14, where we read John's account of Jesus, for the very first time, finally making it perfectly clear his intention to leave them and return to heaven.

Before that night, Jesus had only hinted that he might be going away. When he heard his disciples grumbling about a certain "difficult statement" of his -- that "he who eats this bread shall live forever" (John 6:58) -- Jesus said, "What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?" (v 62). When the Pharisees were plotting to arrest him, Jesus gave them a riddle: "For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me. You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come," John 7:33,34.

It was perplexing to them. The Jews wondered, "Where does this man intend to go that we shall not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He?" (John 7:35). When the Pharisees called him a liar to his face, he answered, "I know where I come from, and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from, or where I am going... I go away, and you shall seek Me, and shall die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come," (John 8:14,21). Their thought was this: "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" (John 8:22).

Jesus had already plainly told his disciples he was going to die at the hands of men, and then would be raised up again: "(Jesus) took the twelve aside and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered up to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again,' Luke 18:31-33. Even just two days before that final Passover, Jesus said to his disciples, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion," Matt 26:2.

But in the minds of the disciples, his resurrection would undoubtedly result in the miraculous manifestation of his coming in power and glory to establish the kingdom and rule in triumphant victory. Jesus even gave them cause to believe that manifestation was imminent, when he said, "The Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels... Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom," (Matt 16:27,28).

But on the night Jesus was betrayed, immediately following that last supper with his disciples, he repeated to them what he had said once before: "Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' now I say to you also," John 13:33. Still unsure of Jesus' meaning, Peter asked him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered with one last riddle, "Where I go, you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow later," (v 36).

Peter then pleads with Jesus: "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You," (v 37). Finally, Jesus lays it all out in the open: "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me -- In My Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again, and receive you to Myself**, that where I am, there you may be also," John 14:1-3. Then he says it bluntly: "I (am going) to the Father," (v 12). That made it final; Jesus would be leaving the earth, and returning to His Father in heaven.

Jesus then promises to send a "Helper", who would be with them, and would help them remember "all that (He) said" to them (John 14:26). In that respect, Jesus assured them, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (v 18), through the intermediary person of the "Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name," (v 26). Jesus realized his leaving would be troubling to them, and wished to reassure them: "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you... Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful... (Rather,) rejoice, because I go to the Father... And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it (happens), you may believe," (John 14:27-29).

Amazingly the disciples were still slow to catch on, perhaps still a bit confused by his earlier riddles, and they wondered, "What is this thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not behold Me; and again in a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?" (John 16:17). Jesus explains it to them: "I have spoken (previously) to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will speak no more to you (that way), but will tell you plainly of the Father... I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again, and going to the Father," John 16:25,28. At last the disciples caught on, saying, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly, and are not using a figure of speech... We believe that You came from God," John 16:29,30.

But then the escalation of tragic, frightening and finally exhilarating events over the next three days caught them up in a whirlwind -- from Jesus' arrest and mockery of a trial, his torture, crucifixion, death and burial, to his resurrection and appearance to them in his transformed presence, about which we read, "On...the first day of the week, and when

the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the [ruling class] Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' And... the disciples...rejoiced when they saw the Lord," John 20:19,20.

For the next forty days following his resurrection Jesus appeared to his followers, finally gathering them together in Jerusalem, to wait "for what the Father had promised," (Acts 1:4). Enough miraculous, emotion-tossing events had occurred in that short time, and he had been with them long enough now, that the disciples must have completely forgotten about his plans to leave them, for as they gathered there, they began asking him, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

Jesus patiently explained what was to come next: "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth," Acts 1:7,8.

This was the same message as the very first instruction Jesus had given them on their first meeting in Galilee following his resurrection, when he told them, "Go...and make disciples of all the nations,...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you," (Matt 28:19,20). This was part of the very purpose of his leaving, that the message of his work of redemption on the cross might have a chance to be spread throughout the world, as he had been telling them: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name **to all the nations**, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things," Luke 24:45-48.

First to the Jews in Jerusalem, then to the inhabitants of the Promised Land of ancient Israel, Judea and Samaria, and then to all the world, the gospel, the good news of salvation, was to be spread by his faithful witnesses. For the first thirteen chapters of Acts we read of the Jews -- both in Jerusalem and those scattered about the Roman Empire from Damascus to Antioch, Cyprus to Iconium -- who accepted their message, so that "a great multitude believed, both of Jews and [God-fearing] Greeks," (Acts 14:1) throughout Judea, Samaria and the adjoining regions of the Jewish dispersion.

From chapter 13 on, we read of Paul and Barnabas' travels to preach the gospel, no longer to the Jews alone, but to the Gentiles as well. Paul proclaimed to the Jews who operated the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, those who were opposing him, this shift in focus: "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first. (But) since you repudiate it,...behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For thus the Lord has commanded us [quoting Isaiah 49:6], 'I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles, that you should bring salvation to the end of the earth,'" Acts 13:45,47.

This was good news to the Gentiles hearing Paul's words, for we read, "And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord... And the word of the Lord was being spread through out the whole region," (vs 48,49).

This was one of the reasons Jesus had for leaving the earth – so that his message of salvation might be spread to the Jews, and also to the whole world. As Peter preached in Jerusalem, “Repent...that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus [back], the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must (keep) until the period of restoration of all things, about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time,” Acts 3:19-21.

And so Peter concluded, “I most certainly understand...that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation, that man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all!)—God raised Him up on the third day... And He ordered us to preach to the people...that through His name every one who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins,” Acts 10:34-43.

James explained to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem what was happening with the church, as more and more Gentiles were being added to it: “Brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written [*quoting Amos 9:11,12*], ‘After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old,’” Acts 15:13-18.

This “taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name” would be the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, that God’s “Servant” would be “a covenant to the people; as a light to the nations,” Is 42:6, and, “according to the faithful mercies shown to David” (a name for the coming Messiah), “behold, I have made Him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples; behold, (He) will call a nation (He does) not know, and a nation which knows (Him) not will run to (Him), because of the LORD (His) God, even the Holy One of Israel, for He has glorified (Him),” Is 55:3-5.

## **Jesus the Bridegroom**

Jesus compared himself to a bridegroom in his parables that we can now understand related to his leaving the earth and returning to heaven: “While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom do not fast, do they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day,” Mark 2:19.

Jesus also referred to his return as that of a master returning from a wedding feast: “Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at table, and will come up

and wait on them... You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect," Luke 12:36-40.

Acting as an Elijah, John the Baptist proclaimed the coming of the kingdom with similar imagery of Jesus as a bridegroom, as we read in the Apostle John's gospel: "John (the Baptist) said..., 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice,'" Jn 3:28-29.

There was a very good reason for Jesus and John the Baptist to refer to Jesus as a bridegroom – because that is exactly what he is. Just as John said, "He who has the bride is the bridegroom." Well, does Jesus have a bride? What do we find in the scriptures? We find Paul telling the believers in Ephesus, "the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of (that) body... Christ...loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might... present to Himself the church in all her glory," Eph 5:22-32.

Paul continues: "Husbands ought...to love their own wives as their own bodies...for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body... This mystery is great, but I am speaking with reference to **Christ and the church**," Eph 5:28-32. As Paul told the Corinthian Christians, "You are [collectively] Christ's body, and individually members of it," 1 Cor 12:27.

Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" And Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ [that is, the Messiah, the Anointed One], the Son of the living God," (Matt 16:1,16). Jesus responded, "Upon this rock," -- that is, upon the statement of Peter's confession, the bedrock of truth that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, -- Jesus said, "upon this rock, I will build My church," (v 18). What is "the church"? The church is the collective body of believers in Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Son of God. The church is Christians.

This rock of truth is what Peter and John preached in Jerusalem following Christ's ascension: "And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number... And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching (that) Jesus (is) the Christ," Acts 5:14,42. They preached, "Jesus Christ the Nazarene, who (was) crucified, whom God raised from the dead... is the stone which was rejected... but which became the very corner stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved," Acts 4:10-12.

There was a time following the events of that day during which most of the believers in Jesus were Jews; but eventually the gospel was spread, mostly by the work of Paul, to the Gentiles, eventually over the centuries being preached to virtually the whole world. By sheer numbers, the vast majority of Christians, living and dead, are Gentiles, and so the bride of Christ, the church, could be said to be predominantly a Gentile one.

Over and over Jesus referred to God as his Father: “The Father who sent Me bears witness of Me,” (John 8:18). The Pharisees asked: “Where is Your Father?” (v 19). Jesus revealed the answer: “I am from above... for I...have come from God... I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me... It is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God’,” (vs 23,42,28,54). Likewise, Jesus is the Son of God; that truth is the rock Peter declared: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Matt 16:16. It is just as Jesus declared of himself: “Because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’ (you say I blaspheme?),” John 10:36. The divine nature is described by scripture in terms of a family relationship: God the Father, and God the Son.

Further, God the Father describes himself as having taken a wife – Israel: “Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem, ‘...I entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine... I adorned you... (but you became an) adulteress wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband!... (So) I shall judge you,... and stop you from playing the harlot... So I shall calm My fury..., and My jealousy will depart from you... You with your daughters will also return to your former state... (And) I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth... You shall know that I am the LORD, in order that you may remember and be ashamed, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done,’ the Lord GOD declares,” Ezek 16:3-63 (*excerpts*).

In a divine familial sense, then, Israel is the mother of Jesus: “According to the flesh,... Israelites, (are) to whom belongs... the covenants... and the promises,...(and) **from whom is the Christ according to the flesh,**” Rom 9:4,5. “And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars [Gen 37:9]; and she was with child... And she gave birth to a son, a male child, **who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron**; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne,” Rev 12:1,2,5. The son who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron is Jesus [Ps 2:9, Rev 2:27;19:15], and Jesus is the son who was caught up to God and to His throne [Acts 1:11; 2:34]. And the mother of Jesus in the flesh is Israel.

So just as God the Father took a wife for himself, a specially chosen one selected out of all the families of the earth [Deu 7:6], so the Son is choosing a people for himself: “Christ... was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has **appeared in these last times** for the sake of you who **through Him** are believers in God... And coming to Him as to a living stone,... you also, as living stones, are being built up as a **spiritual house**... You are a chosen race..., a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession,... for **you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God,**” 1 Pet 1:19-21;2:4-9.

These “last times” chosen people are the church: “The church of God..., (are) those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling,... **all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,**” 1 Cor 1:2. “The church of God (has been) purchased with (Jesus’) own blood,” Acts 20:28. The church is the **bride of Christ**: “The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church... As the church is subject to Christ, so also...wives ought to be to their husbands... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her... **This mystery is great, but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church,**” Eph 5:23-32.



This is why the parables Jesus told comparing the kingdom in heaven to a bridegroom and his coming for a wedding feast takes on a special significance: “The kingdom of heaven (is) comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom... Five... were foolish,... (and) took no (extra) oil with them... Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy... But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’... (Then) the bridegroom came, and those who were ready **went in with him to the wedding feast**, and the door was shut... And later the other virgins (who had no oil) also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us’... Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour,” Matt 25:1-13.

If one reads prophecy as if it is describing literal future events (in the same way and for the same reason Jesus expected the Jews to read the prophecies of his suffering and dying literally), we come across an event in the book of Revelation that draws Jesus’ parables about wedding feasts in heaven closer to literal fulfillment: “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints [Eph 5:27]. And he said to me (John), ‘Write blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb,’” Rev 19:7-9.

The Lamb is Jesus [John 1:36], and he is a bridegroom [John 3:29], and the bride is the church [2 Cor 11:2]. And the marriage between them, and the marriage supper -- the “wedding feast” -- is prophesied to occur in the future, the prophecy of which is found bracketed within the greater prophecy of the “great day of (God’s) wrath” (Rev 6:17) poured out upon all the earth, as revealed in the book of the Revelation to John.

Regarding this wrath, Paul gives the church in Thessalonica a promise about deliverance: “In every place your faith toward God has gone forth,... (about) how you turned to God..., (and how you) wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, **who delivers us from the wrath to come**,” 1 Thess 1:8-10. The wrath to come is the “mystery of God... preached to His servants the prophets,” (Rev 10:7); it is the “day of the LORD (which) come(s) as destruction from the Almighty” (Is 13:6), as Isaiah the Prophet described it, when God will “punish the world for its evil,” (v 11).

Of this day of wrath Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “God has not destined us for (that) wrath, but for obtaining salvation (from it) through our Lord Jesus Christ,” 1 Thess 5:9. How do we know the wrath Paul is saying we are saved from is the wrath of the “day of the Lord”? Because Paul **just said it**: “Now as to the times and the epochs [Acts 1:6,7], brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you, for you yourselves know full well that **‘the day of the Lord’** [Is 13:9; Ezek 30:3; Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18; Oba 1:15; Zeph 1:14; Mal 4:5] will come just like a thief in the night [Matt 24:42-46]. While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child and they shall not escape [Mark 13:7-33],” (vs 1-3).

And then comes Paul’s revelation of the salvation from it: “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that (THAT) day should overtake you like a thief, for you are all sons of light and sons of day... Since we are of the day, let us... put on... as a helmet, the hope of

salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ... Therefore encourage one another," 1 Thess 5:4-11.

## To Receive

Jesus promised his disciples, **"I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also,"** Jn 14:3. And so Paul wrote: "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we **eagerly wait for a Savior**, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble estate into conformity with the body of His glory," Phil 3:20,21.

Paul not only describes how the church is to be saved from the wrath of the day of the Lord, but he also describes how at the same time, in the revelation of a mystery, we will be transformed into the body of Christ's glory: "(Regarding) the resurrection of the dead, it is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power... Just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly... Behold, I tell you a mystery: **we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed**, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality," 1 Cor 15:42-53.

Paul repeats the details of this mystery in which "we shall not all sleep" in the letter to the Thessalonians: "We do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the [authority of the] word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain **until the coming of the Lord**, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. **Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words," 1 Thess 4:13-18.

The Latin Vulgate version of the Bible uses the word *rapiemur* where in the English we read "caught up" in 1Thess 4:17. It is from the root verb *rapio*, "to take away by force." It is from this Latin root we get the word "rapture."<sup>2</sup> God through Jesus "delivers us from the wrath to come" – he *rescues* us from the wrath of the day of the Lord through the *Rapture*.

The Lord told Moses to make "two trumpets of silver,... and you shall use them for summoning the congregation and for having the camps set out. And **when (they) are blown, all the congregation shall gather themselves to you...**" Num 10:1-3. This is in contrast to the seven trumpets of rams' horns used by Joshua to bring down the walls of

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<sup>2</sup> Rapture Questions Continue "Our Blessed Hope" by Chuck Missler, <https://www.khouse.org/articles/2002/444/print/> from an article originally published in the December 2002 Personal Update NewsJournal

Jericho, a foreshadowing of the “seven trumpets” of judgment found in Revelation (Rev 8:6–9:21; 11:15). The “trumpet of God” shall sound, and the saints of the congregation shall be gathered and **“caught up together... in the clouds to meet the Lord.”**

Just as there were seven priests carrying seven rams’ horns as they marched around Jericho, so there are seven angels carrying seven trumpets of judgment against the earth in the day of the Lord’s wrath. Just as the priests marched before the ark of the Lord in silence, so there was “silence in heaven” (Rev 8:1) as the angels received their trumpets, and with the blast of the seventh trumpet, “The temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple,” (Rev 11:19).

Great is the wrath, but also great is the tribulation against the saints, as Jesus prophesied: “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name,” Matt 24:9. John saw the one who would bring this tribulation as a “beast... having ten horns and seven heads,” (Rev 13:1) at the time of the end, who would be given “power and (a) throne and great authority” by the dragon, Satan (v 2,4; 12:9): “And it was (granted) to him to make war with the saints and to **overcome** them,” (v 7).

Because of the fear of the wrath and judgment, and “time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time” spoken of by both Daniel (Dan 12:1) and Jesus (Matt 24:21), the Christians of Paul’s day were encouraged by him **“with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him”** (2 Thess 2:1), not to be “shaken from (their) composure or be disturbed” by anyone claiming that “the day of the Lord has come” (v 2), because, as Paul exhorted, the day of the Lord “will not come unless (that) *departure*<sup>3</sup> comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God,” (vs 3,4).

John, in his vision of the day of the Lord, is shown “a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches in their hands, (crying) out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb,’” (Rev 7:9,10). John knows the church had been promised to be saved from this wrath to come, but now sees “saints...overcome” and “killed” (Rev 13:7,15) by the beast so that it is said of them, “Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!” (Rev 14:12). So John is asked a question by “one of the elders” in his vision, “These who are clothed in...white robes, who are they, and from where have they come?” He answers, “My lord, you know.” And the elder answers, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,” (v 14).

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<sup>3</sup> Greek *apostasia*: withdraw, depart, remove. “Before the King James was published, departure was the accepted translation for *apostasia*.” <https://gracethrufaith.com/ask-a-bible-teacher/2-thes-23-falling-away-or-departure/>

## To Rejoice

Jesus knew his hour had come that he should die (Jn 13:1), and that he would be the True Lamb of that Passover (1 Cor 5:7). And so when “the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover had to be sacrificed” had come (Luke 22:7) and they were about to eat the evening meal <sup>4</sup>, Jesus told his disciples: “I have earnestly desired to eat this [one last] Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, **I shall never eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God,**” (vs 15,16). Luke then writes: “And having taken a cup, when He had given thanks, (Jesus) said, ‘Take this and share it among yourselves, for I say to you, I will not drink of... this fruit of the vine from now on **until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom,**’” (Luke 22:17,18 and Matt 26:29).

Jesus told the parable of this “kingdom of heaven”, which, as he taught, “may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son,” (Matt 22:2). Sound like anyone we know? Luke records the parable as a “dinner” (Luke 14:7). The king “sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast,” (Matt 22:3), and he sent out the servants once more to go out “to the main highways, and as many as you find there, **invite to the wedding feast,**” (v 9); and the slaves went out and “gathered together all they found,... and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests,” (v 10).

In Revelation we read of the “marriage of the Lamb”, for which “His bride has made herself ready,” (Rev 19:7). About all those who come to that wedding feast as “dinner guests”, John was told to write, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb,” (v 9). They will be blessed, as will the members of the bride, the church, because “the kingdom of God is...righteousness and peace and joy,” (Rom 14:17) and “an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,” (2 Cor 4:17).

The bride will be presented before the Lamb “holy and blameless and beyond reproach” (Col 1:22), when he transforms us into “conformity with... His glory” (Phil 3:21); just as Paul told the Corinthian Christians, “I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin,” (2 Cor 11:2). And so he encouraged the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice!” (Phil 4:4).

Three distinct acts occurred on the night before the True Passover: the sharing of an evening meal and a cup of sharing, a sharing of the Eucharist bread and cup, and the foot washing. Just as the bread and cup he shared was a picture of the crucifixion, in a way, the meal of the Last Supper Jesus shared with his disciples, when he shared the cup and dipped the sop<sup>5</sup>, can be considered a picture of the kingdom wedding feast. It will be a time of rejoicing in fellowship with our Bridegroom, for as John wrote, “Beloved,... it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is,” 1 John 3:2.

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<sup>4</sup> The Jewish day starts at nightfall, and continues throughout the night and following day, until the next night. This is based on the first verses in the story of creation (in the book of Genesis), where it says “it was night, and it was day – day one [of creation]” <https://www.yeshiva.co/ask/?id=7469>; therefore the first meal of a new day is the evening meal

<sup>5</sup> KJV John 13:26

## To Reside

Jesus told the disciples, “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places... I go (there) to prepare a place for you... I will come again, and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also,” John 14:2,3. This is why Paul told the Philippian Christians, “(Do not) set (your) minds on earthly things, for our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,” (Phil 3:19,20). Jesus the Bridegroom, the Lamb, is preparing a place for his Bride, the Church, in His Father’s house, in heaven, where he will reside with her in joy and unity.

The Apostle John was shown the dwelling place of the Bride of the Lamb as it would be in the new heaven and new earth, following the thousand year reign of Christ on earth: “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband... And one of the... angels... came and spoke to me, saying, ‘Come here, I shall show you the [dwelling place of the] bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, (new) Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God... (It) measured... fifteen hundred miles (in) length and width and height... And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple.

“And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it... No one who practices (evil) shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life,” Rev 21:2-27 (*excerpts*).

Of this heavenly home the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote, “In these last days (God) has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power... But remember (your) former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,... (even) accept(ing) joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one...

“Do not (discard) your confidence... For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised, **FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY** [Hab 2:3]... Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith... For you have not come to a mountain (of) blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,... but **you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,... to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven**, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant,” Heb 1:2,3; 10:32-37; 12:1,2,18,22-24.

Not only are we promised a future dwelling place in the form of a city, but we are also promised a new dwelling in the form of a body, as Paul wrote: "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, **we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.** For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven,... knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord... we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord," 2 Cor 5:1-8. "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then, **face to face,**" 1 Cor 13:12

"(When) the dead (are) raised, with what kind of body do they come [out of the grave]?" (1 Cor 15:35) Paul asked rhetorically, mocking doubters. Then he answers: "God gives (that which is sown) a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own... There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another... So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body... It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body... Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the heavenly," 1 Cor 15:35,38,40,42,44,49.

So the Son of Man comes to rapture his bride, rescuing her from the wrath to come, in order to receive her to himself, taking her to his Father's house, where he rejoices with her at a wedding feast, and resides with her in the dwelling places prepared for her.

"The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men," Paul told Titus, and because of Jesus' promise to return, we are to be "**looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,**" Titus 2:11-13. We are to keep "fight(ing) the good fight of faith... **until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,** which he will bring about at the proper time," (1 Tim 6:12,14,15).

In the context of his prophecy of the coming of the Son of Man in judgment, wrath, power and glory, Jesus inserted a parenthetical prophecy intimating his next return: "Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore be on the alert, for **you do not know which day your Lord is coming,**" Matt 24:40-42.

So John gives us an admonition to be ready: "And now little children, abide in Him, so that **when He appears,** we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame **at His coming,**" 1 John 2:28. We read: "He was lifted up..., and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky..., behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and... said,... 'This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven,'" Acts 1:9-11.

The Lamb declares: "I am coming quickly,... I am coming quickly,... I am coming quickly," (Rev 22:7,12,20). Three times, to reflect the very nature of the Divine God.

And "the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come,'" (v 17).

## ***The Son of Man Comes...***

### **THIRD: As a King to Recompense the Wicked, Revive Israel, and Restore God's Rule through Judgment**

Jesus reminded the Pharisees of his father David's prophecy of the Messiah: "David in the Spirit call(s) (Messiah), 'Lord', saying, 'The LORD said to my Lord, "**Sit at My right hand, until I put Thine enemies beneath Thy feet,**"'" Matt 22:42-44. Jesus was quoting Psalm 110: "The LORD says to my Lord: '**Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for thy feet.**' [And then] the LORD will stretch forth Thy strong scepter from Zion saying, 'Rule in the midst of Thine enemies'... The Lord is at Thy right hand; [but soon] He will [come and] shatter kings in the day of His wrath. [Then] He will judge among the nations. He will fill them with corpses; He will shatter the chief men over a broad country."

As the writer of Hebrews affirmed: "Jesus... endured the cross,... and has sat down **at the right hand** of the throne of God," Heb 12:2. But the writer also confirms the prophecy of David that this is a temporary position: "Jesus Christ,... having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, **waiting from that time onward until** His enemies [are to] be made a footstool for His feet," Heb 10:12,13.

This ruling of Messiah "in the midst of (his) enemies" was prophesied by David as a fulfillment of a promised inheritance from God the Father to the Son: "The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed (Messiah)[, saying]: 'Let us tear their fetters apart, and cast away their cords from us!' He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury: 'But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.' [And that King will say:] 'I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, "Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and **I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession.** Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware,'" Ps 2:2-9.

While God the Father's throne "is in heaven," (Ps 11:4), the Son's throne is "the throne of David and...his kingdom" (Is 9:7). While God the Father "has prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all," (Ps 103:19 KJV), the Son "shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the **throne of his father David,**" (Luke 1:32 KJV) so that "the LORD will be king **over all the earth,**" (Zech 14:9).

It is the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy: "Thus says the LORD, '**I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem,**'" Zech 8:3. In the Son's first coming when his feet were on the earth, he was a "king...coming to (Zion) endowed with salvation,

humble, and mounted on a donkey,” (Zech 9:9). But in his second coming when his feet “will stand on the Mount of Olives” (Zech 14:4) once again, he will “go forth and fight against (the) nations” (v 3), so that “His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth,” (9:10).

David’s prophecy of Psalm 2 continues: “Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth: Worship the LORD with reverence, and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled,” vs 10-12 [see Luke 12:49].

This coming of the Messiah to rule the earth from Jerusalem is what the Jews of Jesus’ day were waiting for and expecting Jesus to fulfill in his appearance on earth, including his very Jewish disciples: “When (the disciples) had come together, they were asking (the risen Jesus), saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’” Acts 1:6. While Jesus told them in response to this question, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority” (v 7), he had already answered the question they had previously posed, when they had asked, “Tell us,... what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matt 24:3). The answer was a summary of those prophecies already given by Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, Zephaniah, and others, reciting the coming troubles and tribulations upon the earth just prior to the coming of “the Son of Man”, this time “with power and great glory” (v 30).

“A great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall [quoting Dan 12:1]” (Matt 24:21) is how Jesus summarized what would occur just prior to his coming: “But immediately after the tribulation of those days ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light’ [quoting Is 13:10], and ‘the stars will fall from the sky, and the power of the heavens will be shaken’ [quoting Is 34:4 and 13:13], and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see ‘the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky’ [quoting Dan 7:13] with power and great glory [a reference to Ps 145:10-13],” (vs 29,30).

In quoting Isaiah, Jesus was revealing that this tribulation he was describing was the very same trouble that had been identified by that prophet as “the day of the LORD” (Is 13:6), a day of judgment and wrath upon the earth – “Behold, **the day of the LORD is coming**, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; THE SUN WILL BE DARK when it rises, AND THE MOON WILL NOT SHED ITS LIGHT. Thus I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity,” Is 13:9-11.

Therefore, all prophecies related to “the day of the LORD” and the time of God’s wrath and judgment upon the earth would be speaking of this very same time Jesus described as leading up to his return to rule his kingdom on earth. That would include some certain prophesies of Joel, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai and Zachariah, as well as large portions of Isaiah, and a few random references in Psalms.



In quoting Daniel, Jesus was revealing that this tribulation was the very same “time of distress” (Dan 12:1) that would also come upon Israel – “Now at that time (when the king of the North sets up the abomination of desolation in the sanctuary), Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people (the Jews), will arise. And **there will be a time of distress** such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time,” Dan 11:31, 12:1. It will be the very same distress Jeremiah prophesied: “Alas! For that day is great, there is none like it; and it is a **time of Jacob’s distress**, but he will be saved from it... For I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you,” Jer 30:7,11. Thus Jesus warned, “And let those **who are in Judea** flee to the mountains... Pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath,” Matt 24:16,20.

Jesus made it very clear that this time of great tribulation upon the world and upon Israel would immediately proceed his coming: “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door,” Matt 24:32,33. In fact, Jesus set a timer on when he would come following the things he described: “Truly I say to you, this generation (which sees all these things) will not pass away until all these things (described) take place,” (v 34).

We are able to figure an approximate maximum time span for how long a generation takes to “pass away” by two other scripture references: 1) the generation of Israelites who wandered in the wilderness [Num 14:33], and 2) the generation of Jesus’ day who would see the temple destroyed [Matt 23:36, 24:2]. Both time spans were no longer than about 40 years.

There was one very significant “thing” Jesus mentioned that would “take place” so as to identify the explicit start date of this great tribulation time: “When you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place (‘let the reader understand’, added Matthew), then... there will (start the) great tribulation,” (Matt 24:15). Therefore, we are able to deduce that from the moment the “abomination of desolation” is set up in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, the maximum outside length of time before Jesus’ return would be no longer than 40 years.

A closer examination of Daniel’s prophecy will suggest, in fact, no more than 1,335 days will transpire from “the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up” (Dan 12:11,12) until “the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One, (the One whose) kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him,” (Dan 7:27).

While we can figure the exact time of when Jesus will return relative to the setting up of the abomination of desolation in the rebuilt temple, and thus the start of the “great tribulation”, what Jesus made clear was that no man could know when that start event would come, so as to predict his return before that event transpired, and the great day of God’s wrath on the earth would begin: “But of that day and hour (when the tribulation begins) no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the

Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be... But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into," Matt 24:36-39,43.

The coming of the Son of Man in power and glory to set up his kingdom is considered in scripture then to have begun with the start of the wrath of the day of the Lord being poured out upon the earth, and the distress upon Israel – "Come, my people, enter into your rooms, and close your doors behind you; hide for a little while, until indignation runs its course. For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; and the earth will reveal her bloodshed, and will no longer cover her slain," Is 26:20,21.

When read literally, these prophetic passages describe a day when Jesus will physically return to the earth, pouring out wrath and judgment upon the wicked who have rebelled against God's ruling authority, in order to set himself up as king over all the earth, ruling the nations (a literal expression) with a rod of iron (an idiom representing a literal authoritative administration of some kind – see Zech 14:17-19).

Before choosing an alternate interpretation, one may wish to first consider John's warning in his second epistle: "Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming **in the flesh**. This is the deceiver and the antichrist... If any one comes to you and does not bring this teaching (that Christ is coming in the flesh), do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds," 2 John 7-11.

John followed that up with a "revelation of Jesus Christ... to show... the things which must shortly take place... Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near... Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come..., (that is,) from Jesus Christ,... the (coming) ruler of the kings of the earth... Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him [quoting Zech 12:14]. Even so (come). Amen," Rev 1:1,3-5,7.

The resurrected Jesus traveled with two disciples who did not recognize him, but who were speaking of him, saying, "Jesus... was a prophet... crucified... But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel... (Then) some women... came, saying... He was alive," Luke 24:13-24. Jesus responded: "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (vs 25,26); "and beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures," (v 27). And again he said, "**All things** which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms **must be fulfilled**," (v 44).

## To Recompense

*“Come, behold the works of the LORD, who has wrought desolations in the earth...”Ps 45:8*

When Jesus told the disciples, “all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled,” he certainly was referring to the prophecies of Messiah suffering (Is 53:3-7), dying (vs 8-12), and being “cut off” (Dan 9:26). But if “**all things**” written about him “**must be fulfilled**”, that must therefore also include his coming to “reign() over the nations” (Ps 47:8) from “the city of God, His holy mountain..., the joy of the whole earth,... Mount Zion” (Ps 48:1,2): “The LORD Most High is to be feared, a great King over all the earth. He subdues peoples under us, and nations under our feet,” (Ps 47:2,3).

David prophesied about that day: “For lo, the kings assembled themselves, they passed by together. They saw it, then they were amazed; they were terrified, they fled in alarm. Panic seized them there, anguish, as of a woman in childbirth,” Ps 48:4-6. That is because “in the last days, the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains,... and all the nations will stream to it... For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations... For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning against everyone who is proud and lofty... The LORD alone will be exalted in that day... Men will go into caves of the rocks, and into holes of the ground before the terror of the LORD, and before the splendor of His majesty, when He arises to make the earth tremble,” (Is 2:2-4, 12, 19).

Jesus, like his father David, was a prophet, and as such he himself spoke of his already prophesied coming in judgment in the “prophetic perfect tense”, that is, as if it had already occurred<sup>6</sup>: “I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!” Luke 12:49. This is the fire Isaiah foresaw: “Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty... (It) is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it,” (Is 13:6,9).

Isaiah used the same metaphor about that day that David did: “All hands will fall limp, and every man’s heart will melt. And they will be terrified; pains and anguish will take hold of them; they will writhe like a woman in labor, they will look at one another in astonishment,” (Is 13:7,8). Why? Because “the LORD is about to come out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth” (Is 26:21).

The motivation for this punishment is explained in the parable of the landowner “who planted a vineyard... and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey,” (Matt

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<sup>6</sup> “The prophetic perfect tense is a literary technique used in the Bible that describes future events that are so certain to happen that they are referred to in the past tense as if they already happened.”  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophetic\\_perfect\\_tense](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophetic_perfect_tense)

21:33). As Jesus described to the chief priests and the elders of the people who questioned his authority: "When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to... receive his produce. (But) the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. (Finally,) he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance.' And they took him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

"Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" The priests and elders rightly responded, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons," (Matt 21:34-41).

While Jesus told the story to emphasize the point that the leadership of Israel, and hence the nation itself, will be judged for rejecting "the stone" which shall become the "chief corner stone" (v 42), the analogy holds true for the judgment coming upon the whole earth and its sinners, just as Peter declared: "The present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men," 2 Pet 3:7.

Peter was speaking of the day of judgment that Isaiah prophesied: "Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place; burning is his anger; and dense is his smoke; his lips are filled with indignation, and his tongue is like a consuming fire; and his breath is like an overflowing torrent, which reaches to the neck, to shake the nations back and forth in a sieve, and to put in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads to ruin," Is 30:27-28.

This day of vengeance upon the earth is not only to punish the wicked, but it is also to save Israel, just as David prophesied: "O LORD, God of vengeance; God of vengeance, shine forth! Rise up, O Judge of the earth; render recompense to the proud. How long shall the wicked, O LORD, how long shall the wicked exult?... They crush Thy people, O LORD, and afflict Thy heritage... (But) the LORD will not abandon His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance... (For) the LORD has been my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge. And He has brought back their wickedness upon them, and will destroy them in their evil; the LORD our God will destroy them," Ps 94:1-7,14,22,23.

Because Israel is still God's chosen nation on earth, it is natural that the more wicked the world becomes, the more the world hates Israel, which reminds them of God and his authority. So we read in Daniel's vision of "the appointed time of the end" (Dan 8:19) that a "king will arise, insolent and skilled in intrigue... And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree... mighty men and the holy people," (vs 23,34). He will "exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods... He will also enter the Beautiful Land [Israel]... He will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many... At that time... there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time... (It will) be for a time, times,

and half a time; and as soon as (his forces) finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed,” (Dan 11:36,41,44; 12:1,7).

This “time, times, and half a time” is decoded by the immediate text: “From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished (by the insolent king) and the abomination of desolation is set up (in the sanctuary), there will be 1,290 days [i.e., roughly 3 and one half years of 360 day count – a prophetic year]. How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!” (Dan 12:11,12).

What happens then? “The indignation is finished” (Dan 11:36) in that “a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on (that) one who makes desolate,” (9:27). What causes his complete destruction so as to end the indignation? “That (king) was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom... (While the boasting king) will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One (so that) they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time,.. the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.

“Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him,” (Dan 7:21-27).

This is why King David wrote of that great event, “Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice... before the LORD, for He is coming; for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in His faithfulness,” Ps 96:11,13. It will be a day when “the LORD will be zealous for His land, and will have pity on His people... (He will) say to His people,.. ‘I will never again make you a reproach among the nations. But I will remove the (King of the North’s) army far from you, and I will drive it into a parched and desolate land... And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up, for it has done (terrible) things,” (Joel 2:18-20).

This is why Isaiah wrote of the day of vengeance as if it is a day of salvation: “For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion... Behold, your God will come with vengeance; the recompense of God will come, but He will save you,” Is 34:8; 35:4. Just as Isaiah wrote, the coming Messiah’s proclamation: ““The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called Oaks of Righteousness, the Planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified,” Is 61:1-3.

So the day of the Lord is both a day of rejoicing, for the Messiah comes to redeem Israel, and a day of fear, for he cleanses the land of its wicked: “The Lord, whom you seek, will

suddenly come to his temple; the Messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight, behold, he is coming. But who can endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like a fuller's soap," Mal 3:1,2. As Isaiah prophesied: "Behold the LORD lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface, and scatters its inhabitants... (For) the earth is... polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left," Is 24:1-6.

The destruction and wrath of his coming is a work of God: "For the LORD will rise up... **to do His task, His unusual task, and to work His work, His extraordinary work...** For I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts, of decisive destruction on all the earth," Is 28:21-22. "Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty... Blow a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm on My holy mountain!... For the day of the LORD is coming;... a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness..." Joel 1:15; 2:1,2.

The deliverance and rescue of his coming is also a work of God: "I will display wonders (works) in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire, and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. **And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered;** for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, as the LORD said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

"For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat [the judgment of Jehovah]. Then I will enter into judgment with them there **on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel...** Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there... Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great... (and) the day of the LORD is near," Joel 2:30-32; 3:1,2,11,13,14.

This is the same figurative language John used to describe the vision of the wrath of God in his book of the revelation of the end: "And the angel swung his sickle to the earth, and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles," Rev 14:19,20.

This treading of the wine press is a work attributed to the "One Called Faithful and True, (who) in righteousness... judges and wages war" (Rev 19:11): "He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God... And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS,'" Rev 19:13-16.

His robe is dipped in the blood of those He slays: “Who is this who comes from Edom, with garments of (crimson) colors from Bozrah, this One who is majestic in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength? ‘It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.’ Why is your apparel red, and Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? ‘I have trodden the wine trough alone, and from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger, and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, and I stained all My raiment.

“For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and My year of redemption has come... And I trod down the peoples in My anger, and made them drunk in My wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth,” Is 63:1-6.

This day of vengeance is what Zephaniah was describing: “On the day of the LORD’s wrath... all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy, for He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the (wicked) inhabitants of the earth... ‘Wait for Me,’ declares the LORD, ‘For the day when I rise up to the prey. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out My indignation, all My burning anger; for all the earth will be devoured by the fire of My zeal,’” Zeph 1:18; 3:8.

The indignation of the last days culminates with this gathering of the nations for the “war of the great day of God, the Almighty”: “Spirits of demons... go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty, (Behold, I am coming like a thief... [see Matt 24:43]) And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon [hills of Meggido – or, Armageddon],” Rev 16:14-16.

This war is also called “the great supper of God”, because the birds will feast on the corpses of the fallen: “I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, ‘Come, assemble for the great supper of God; in order that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them’... And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army... And the (armies) were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh,” Rev 19:17-21.

Jesus made a veiled reference to this “supper”, when he was describing the coming of the Son of Man in power and glory: “Just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. **Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather,**” Matt 24:28. And Isaiah finishes his book of visions with the same warning: “‘All mankind will come to bow down before Me,’ says the LORD. ‘Then they shall go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched; and they shall be an abhorrence to all mankind,’” Is 66:23,24.

## To Revive

*“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me; Thou wilt stretch forth Thy hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Thy right hand will save me... Do not forsake the works of Thy hands,” Ps 138:7,8*

The last days of vengeance will bring distress on Jerusalem as she is surrounded by the armies of her enemies – **but God will save her!** “Woe, O Ariel, Ariel the city where David once camped!... I will bring distress to Ariel... I will camp against you encircling you,... then you shall be brought low... But the multitude of your enemies shall become like fine dust, and the multitude of the ruthless ones like the chaff which blows away; and it shall happen instantly, suddenly. From the LORD of hosts (they) shall be punished with thunder and earthquake and loud noise, with whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a consuming fire. And (by that punishment) the multitude of all the nations who wage war against Ariel, even all who wage war against her and her stronghold, and who distress her, shall be like a dream, a vision of the night... Thus the multitude of all the nations shall be, who wage war against Mount Zion,” Is 29:1-8.

As the great commission was first spreading among the Gentiles, James relayed to the Jerusalem church a local prophet’s message, saying, “Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name,” (Acts 15:14). James re-assured the church that “with this (message) the words of the Prophets agree,” (v 15). He then quotes Amos 9:11,12: “‘After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD’, who makes these things known from of old,” Acts 15:16-18.

James points out that the Amos prophecy mentions “all the nations who are called by (the Lord’s) name”, thereby supporting Simeon’s message that the gospel must first go to the Gentiles, but James is also re-affirming the belief and hope of the Christian Jews there in Jerusalem that Messiah’s return will “restore” the “ruins”, since the context of Amos’ prophecy was pointedly speaking of Israel’s demise: “Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob... (but) I will shake the house of Jacob among the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve... (After) that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old,” Amos 9:8,9,11.

Jesus himself had also prophesied this same scattering of the people among the nations: “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand... For there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and



**Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,”** Luke 21:20,23,24.

This “desolation” and scattering that Jesus warned about also included the destruction of the temple, the “tabernacle of David”: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!... Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!... Truly I say to you, not one stone (of the temple buildings) shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down,” Matt 23:37,38; 24:2.

Isaiah saw this trampling of Jerusalem and the desolation of the temple, and called on God to come down for the sake of his habitation: “Look down from heaven, and see from Thy holy and glorious habitation... Return for the sake of Thy servants, the tribes of Thy heritage. Thy holy people possessed Thy sanctuary for a little while, (but) our adversaries have trodden it down. We have become like those over whom Thou hast never ruled, like those who were not called by Thy name. O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at Thy presence... To make Thy name known to Thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence!” Is 63:15,17,18,19; 64:1,2.

Hosea also saw the time that the Gentiles would trample the holy places, but prophesied the return of Israel, seeking the Lord “in the last days”: “For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, and without ephod or household idols. Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness **in the last days,**” Hos 3:4,5.

Hosea even suggested how long it might last – “after two days”: “Come let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days [see 2 Pet 3:8]; He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him... He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth,” Hos 6:1-3.

Hosea recited the words of the Lord as He affirms his intention to “deliver” Israel, but also why he brought a judgment on her in the first place: “I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by the LORD their God... and the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one leader... [But first,] contend with your mother, contend, for **she [acts as if she] is not my wife, and [as if] I am not her husband,**... let her put away her harlotry from her face... She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; and she will seek them, but will not find them. Then she will say, “I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now!” For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil, and lavished on her silver and gold... I will put an end to all her gaiety, her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her festal assemblies. And I will destroy her vines and fig trees,” Hos 1:7,11; 2:2,7,8,11,12.

The Lord then describes through Hosea how he will restore Israel to himself: “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, **bring her into the wilderness** [see Rev 12:6,14],

and speak kindly to her. Then I will give her her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor [*Trouble – see Joshua 7:24*] as a door of hope. And she will sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. And it will come about in that day,' declares the LORD, 'That you will call Me "Ishi" [*my Husband*] and will no longer call Me "Baali" [*my Master, or my Baal*]. For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth... In that day I will also make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion, and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD,'" Hosea 2:14-20.

Isaiah also prophesied of this time of God's restoration of his bride Israel when he brings judgment on all the nations: "Clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion; clothe yourself in your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city... Shake yourself from the dust, rise up, O captive Jerusalem... For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem... The LORD has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations, that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God... Fear not, for you will (no longer) be put to shame... but you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.

**"For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the LORD of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth. For the LORD has called you, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected,' Says your God. 'For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you,' says the LORD your Redeemer... 'For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken,' says the LORD who has compassion on you,"** Is 52:1,2,9,10; 54:5-8,10.

At the time of the revival of Israel with the coming of the Son of Man in power and glory, His chosen people will once again say, "The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds... Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!" Ps 147:2,3,12.

This reviving of Israel comes as a fulfillment of God's faithfulness to his covenant: "Behold days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell in safety...' Thus says the LORD, 'If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers

over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them,” Jer 33:14-16,25,26.

But hasn't God forsaken Israel? What does Paul say? “I do not want you, (Christian) brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery [*a thing previously hidden and unknown but now being fully revealed and knowable*], lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a *partial hardening has happened* to Israel **until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in** [to the Church]; and thus [*when after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*] **all Israel will be saved, just as it is written** [quoting Is 59:20]: ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion; He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them, [Quoting Is 27:9] when I take away their sins.’ (So) from the standpoint of the gospel they (may seem) like enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice **they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; FOR THE GIFTS AND CALLING OF GOD ARE IRREVOCABLE,**” Rom 11:25-28. As the Psalms declare: “The LORD will not abandon His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance,” Ps 94:14.

It is a declaration from God that He is jealous for the land of Israel, and will bring them back: “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her.’ Thus says the LORD, ‘I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain... Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; and I will bring them back, and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem, and they will be My people and I will be their God in truth and righteousness... In those days ten men from the nations of every language will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you,”” Zech 8:2,3,7,8,23.

The prophecies of the restoration of Israel are so numerous, they are like the trees of a vast forest: “But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father, we are the clay, and Thou our potter; and all of us are the work of Thy hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD, neither remember iniquity forever; behold, look now, all of us are Thy people. Thy holy cities have become a wilderness, Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation... Thus says the LORD, ‘So I will act on behalf of My servants in order not to destroy all of them. And I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, and an heir of My mountains from Judah; even My chosen ones shall inherit it, and My servants shall dwell there,”” Is 64:8-10; 65:8-9.

For some Christians, it is as if they cannot see the forest for the trees, as they deny that God will restore Israel to the land in the latter days. But God's declaration of judgment upon the nations on behalf of His people Israel remains adamant and undeniable: “In indignation Thou didst march through the earth; in anger Thou didst trample the nations. Thou didst go forth **for the salvation of Thy people**, for the salvation of Thine anointed... In my place I tremble, because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us... Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord GOD is my strength,” Hab 3:16-19.

But it is not because of the righteousness of Israel that God takes this action, but for the sake of his own holy name: “O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be cultivated and sown... I will cause you to be inhabited as you were formerly and will treat you better than at the first. Thus you will know that I am the LORD. Yes, I will cause men – My people Israel – to walk on you and possess you, so that you will become their inheritance and never again bereave them of children... And I will not let you hear insults from the nations anymore... When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, “These are the people of the LORD; yet they have come out of His land.”

“But I had concern for My holy name... **(Thus) it is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name**, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name... Then the nations will know that I am the LORD... when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean... And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God,” Ezek 36:8-28.

Yet this salvation and restoration will not come without chastisement: “It is the time of Jacob’s distress, but he will be saved from it... on that day... I will break his yoke from off their neck,... and strangers shall no longer make them their slaves. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them... I am with you... to save you; for I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you, only I will not destroy you completely. **But I will chasten you justly, and will by no means leave you unpunished,**” Jer 30:7-11.

The punishment comes in the form of a military assault upon Jerusalem itself: “For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the house plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle,” Zech 14:23.

But for those who heed the prophetic warning, and flee from the city, a refuge from this assault is available to them: “And the woman (clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars, whose child is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron) fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for 1,260 days... And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time,” Rev 12:6,14.

In anticipation of this fleeing into the wilderness refuge, Zephaniah wrote: “Gather yourselves together, yes, gather, O nation without shame, before the decree takes effect... Before the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you, before the day of the LORD’s anger comes upon you. Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land who have

carried out His ordinances; seek righteousness, seek humility. (And) **perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger,**" Zeph 2:1-3.

This place of refuge is what Isaiah was referring to, when he wrote: "Come, My people, enter into your rooms and close your doors behind you; **hide for a little while until indignation runs its course,**" Is 26:20. The cities of refuge may be a type for this wilderness place: "The manslayer who kills any person unintentionally, without premeditation, may flee (to one of the cities of refuge), and they shall become **your refuge from the avenger of blood,**" Joshua 20:3.

Those who heed the warning and flee will say this when the Redeemer comes: "And it will be said in that day, 'Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation," Is 25:9. For those who do not heed, to them God declares: "I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant," Ezek 20:37.

Israel will recognize their Messiah for who he is: "He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him," Rev 1:7. "They will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son; and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn," Zec 12:10.

The reviving of Israel will include physical blessings in the land: "Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,... We will say,... 'In Thee the orphan finds mercy.' (And the LORD says,) 'I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; He will blossom like the lily, and he will take root like the cedars of Lebanon. His shoots will sprout, and his beauty will be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon, those who live in his shadow will again raise grain, and they will blossom like the vine. His renown will be like the wine of Lebanon,'" Hosea 14:1-7.

Once the Deliverer has come to Zion, Isaiah's prophecy will then have come true: "Israel has been saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation; (she) will (never again) be put to shame or humiliated to all eternity," Is 45:17

"All who devour you shall be devoured... and all who prey upon you I will give for prey. For I will restore you to health and I will heal you of your wounds,' declares the LORD, 'Because they have called you an outcast, saying: "It is Zion; no one cares for her"... Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob and have compassion on his dwelling places; and the city shall be built on its ruin, and the palace shall stand on its rightful place... And their ruler shall come forth from their midst; And I will bring him near, and he shall approach Me... And you shall be My people, and I will be your God... In the latter days you will understand this,'" Jer 30:16-18, 21-24.

*Other passages that describe the restoration of Israel: Is 32:15-18, Is 33:20, Is 44:21-26, Is 49:22-23,26, Is 62:1-12; Micah 2:12; Jer 31:31-40*

## To Rule

When his disciples asked Jesus, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6), he didn’t answer, “There will be no restoration of the kingdom,” rather, he told them, “It is not for you to know the times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority,” (v7). This is because no one knows when that day will come, “not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone,” (Mark 13:32).

But it is a promise from God that “the Christ... the Son of David” will sit at the right hand of God “until (He) put(s) (His) enemies beneath (His) feet,” (Mark 12:36, one of seven times the New Testament quotes Ps 110:1). This is why, as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt in what has come to be called “the triumphal entry”, the people were “crying out, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD; **Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!**’” (Mark 11:9,10). They knew the words of the Psalm: “The LORD will stretch forth Thy strong scepter from Zion, saying, ‘**Rule in the midst of Thine enemies.**’...The Lord is at Thy right hand; He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath. He will judge among the nations,” Psalm 110:2,5,6.

The people were expecting the Son of David, the promised Messiah, to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah: “A child shall be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders... There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, **on the throne of David and over his kingdom**, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness **from then on and forevermore**. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this,” Is 9:6,7.

When this happens, it will be the very fulfillment of the original covenant promise God made to David about his son who shall reign **forever** over his kingdom: “I took you from the pasture... that you should be ruler over My people Israel... I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly,... and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you.

“‘When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and **I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever**. I will be a father to Him, and He will be a Son to Me... My lovingkindness shall not depart from Him... And **your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever,**” 2 Sam 7:8-16.

This promise to David is why Jeremiah calls the coming Messiah a “righteous **Branch of David**”: “‘Behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth,’” Jer 33:14,15.

It will fulfill the good word of Isaiah: "Then a Shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit... In that day the nations will resort to the Root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious," Is 11:10. Paul confirmed to the Roman Christians that Jesus is this Branch: "For I say that Christ has become a servant to the (Jews) on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers... (As) Isaiah says, 'There shall come the Root of Jesse, and He who arises to rule over the Gentiles,'" Rom 15:8,12.

Jesus' pedigree as the son of David is verified by the genealogy recorded by Luke: "Jesus Himself... the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse,... the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God," Luke 3:23-38. As Paul wrote: "The gospel of God (was) promised... through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by (His) resurrection from the dead,... Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom 1:1-4.

Jesus asked the question of the officials in the temple: "How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?... David himself calls Him 'Lord'; and so in what sense is He his son?" (Mark 12:35,37). The answer is found in the angel's proclamation to Mary: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God... (For) you will... bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called **the Son of the Most High**; and the Lord God will give Him the throne **of His father David**; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end," Luke 1:35,31-33. Jesus is the son of David in the flesh through Mary, and is the son of God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The promise to David that Israel will "not be disturbed again" is fulfilled through this Branch of David: "In those days Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell in safety," (v 16). That David's house and his throne would be established "forever" through this Branch is affirmed by Jeremiah's words from Jehovah: "For thus says the LORD, 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel... If you can break My covenant for the day, and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne,'" (vs 17,20,21).

Jesus affirmed he would sit on the throne: "In the regeneration,... the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne," Matt 19:28. It is the word of the Lord through Ezekiel: "I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them... And they will be My people, and I will be their God. And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them. And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever..."

And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever,” Ez 37:21-27.

Following the “great supper of God” at the time of the end when the “King of kings” seizes the beast and kills with a sword “the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him” (Rev 19:19-21), an angel from heaven will “(lay) hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and (will bind) him for **a thousand years**, (throwing) him into the abyss, and shut(ing) it and seal(ing) it over him... until **the thousand years** (are) completed,” (Rev 20:1-3). This is when the faithful dead saints of the tribulation will “(come) to life and reign() with Christ **for a thousand years**,” (v 4). As John wrote, “These... will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for **a thousand years**,” (v 6).

A thousand years is a millennium; this time described in Revelation 20 is often referred to as the Millennial Reign of Christ. According to Ligonier Ministries, “Revelation 20:1-6 is the only passage in Scripture that deals with the millennial reign of Christ explicitly.”<sup>7</sup>

While it is true there is no other passage that mentions the *length of time* of the reign of Christ on this present earth, there are a multitude of passages that explicitly describe the reign of Christ as a literal reality over all the earth -- one of the most explicit being Zechariah 14: “I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle... Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations... **In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives**... (On that day) the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!... **The LORD will be king over all the earth**... Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site... And people will live in it, and there will be no more curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security... Then it will come about that any who are **left of all the nations will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts**, and the celebrate the Feast of Booths.

“And it will be that whichever of the **families of the earth** does not **go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts**, there will be no rain on them... It will be the plague with which the LORD **smites the nations** who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths... And every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a (merchant, *or money changer*) in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day,” Zech 14:1-21 (*excerpts*).

Over and over the reign of the Lord as king over all the nations of the earth is explicitly prophesied, coming after a great judgment: “The earth is... polluted by its inhabitants,... a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty... The earth is broken asunder,... for its transgression is heavy about it... So it will happen in that day, that the LORD will punish the host of heaven, on high, and the kings of the earth, on earth... **For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem**, and His glory will be before His elders,” Is 24:5,6,19-23.

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<sup>7</sup> “The Millennial Reign of Christ” <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/millennial-reign-christ/> First published in *Tabletalk Magazine*, an outreach of Ligonier



As pre-millennialist preacher David Legge has noted, if we read the Scriptures using a literal interpretation, that is, “a plain normal understanding”, “we come to (the) conclusion (that) the Old Testament... teaches a literal earthly kingdom of Messiah.”<sup>8</sup>

Jeremiah contains just such a teaching: “‘And it shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land,’ declares the LORD,... ‘At that time they shall call Jerusalem “The Throne of the LORD,” and all the nations shall be gathered to it, for the name of the LORD in Jerusalem... In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance,’” Jer 3:16-18.

That throne shall be occupied by the Branch of David: “‘Behold, the days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; **and He will reign as king** and act wisely and do justice and righteousness **in the land,**’” Jer 23:5. “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is... It is... He who will bear the honor and **sit and rule on His throne,**’” Zech 6:12,13. “In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel,” Is 4:2.

David wrote of him: “Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness to the king’s Son. May He judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thine afflicted with justice... May He also rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth... Let all kings bow down before Him, all nations serve Him... Let all nations call Him blessed... May the whole earth be filled with His glory,” Ps 72:1,2,8-11,17,19.

“Thou didst speak in vision to Thy godly ones, and didst say,... ‘I have exalted One Chosen from the people. I have found David My servant; with My holy oil I have anointed Him, with whom My had will be established... I shall crush His adversaries before Him, and strike those who hate Him... He will cry to Me, “Thou art My Father, My God, and the rock of My salvation.” I also shall make Him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My lovingkindness I will keep for Him forever, and My covenant shall be confirmed in Him...

“‘My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: his descendants shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful,’” Ps 89:34-37.

*“Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O Israel!... The LORD has taken away His judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you will fear disaster no more,” Zeph 3:14,15.*

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<sup>8</sup> The Book of the Revelation – Part 19: “The Millennial Reign of Christ” David Legge, Copyright 2008 Preach the Word <https://www.preachtheword.com/sermon/rev19.shtml>

## Six Works of God

### II. He Calls (in the Resurrection of the Righteous)

*“The Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and **greater works than these will He show Him**, that you may marvel. For just as the Father **raises the dead and gives them life**, even so the Son **also gives life to whom He wishes...** I say to you, an hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live... Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth...” John 5:1-29*

Jesus told his disciples that God the Father was showing him all the works that he was doing, but then revealed that there was an even greater work to come, that of raising the dead to life, and that he would be the instrument of that work. As Jesus told Martha: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die,” John 11:25.

Jesus made clear that all would be raised, some to life, and others to a resurrection of judgment: “Just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man... An hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds, **to a resurrection of life**, those who committed the evil deeds to **a resurrection of judgment**,” John 5:26-29.

The “resurrection to life” is called “the first resurrection”, and is the **resurrection of the righteous**: “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the **first resurrection**; over these the second death has no power,” Rev 20:6. “For as in Adam all die, so also (all who are) in Christ... shall be made alive,” we read in 1 Cor 15:22. As Jesus taught: “Those who are considered worthy to attain to... the resurrection from the dead... (can) neither... die any more, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection,” Luke 20:35,36. When one does good towards unfortunate ones who cannot repay the kindness, as Jesus revealed, “(one) will be blessed,... for (that one) will be repaid **at the resurrection of the righteous**,” (Luke 14:14).

On the other hand, the resurrection to the second death, taking place at the end of the thousand year reign of Christ before the “great white throne”, is a resurrection of judgment: “I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it... And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds... This is **the second**

**death**, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire," Rev 20:11-15.

Jesus brought Lazarus back to life, not only because he "loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus" (John 11:5), but "for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it," (v 4), so that the people "may believe that (the Father had sent Him)," (v 42). It was also to prove that the Son has the power to "give() life to whom He wishes," (v 21). It is the resurrection that proves without a doubt the power of God. As Paul told the Romans: "Christ Jesus,... born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,... was (validated) the Son of God with power by (His) resurrection from the dead," Rom 1:3,4.

The average Jew of Jesus' day apparently believed there would be a resurrection of the dead. When Lazarus died, Jesus went to his town and said to Martha, "Your brother shall rise again," (John 11:23). Martha replied, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day," (v 24). Daniel completes the record of his visions with the words of the angel: "As for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age," Dan 12:13.

But Martha then also declared the truth of by what authority Jesus is able to raise the dead: "Yes, Lord, I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, He who comes into the world," (v 27). This truth is the rock upon which the church is founded, confessed by Peter to Jesus: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Matt 16:16. All who believe he is, are in him and will be raised by him.

Amazingly, not only was there a prominent sect of Judaism in Jesus' day, the Sadducees, who believed there is no resurrection of the dead (Matt 22:23; Acts 23:8), but there were apparently people within the early church who believed that also: "How do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" Paul asked the Corinthians (1 Cor 15:12). Paul made clear to the Christians there in Corinth that if there were no resurrection, "we are of all men most to be pitied" (v 19): "We preach (that Christ) has been raised from the dead... But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain; your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised," 1 Cor 15:12-15.

Paul continued, belaboring this essential fact of logic: "For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished," 1 Cor 15:16-18. The bottom line for Paul: "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord..., and may be found in Him... having a righteousness... which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings... in order that I (myself) may attain to **the resurrection from the dead**," Phi 3:8-117.

In the book of Hebrews, learning and understanding about the resurrection of the dead is said to be one of the "elementary teaching(s)", along with "repentance from dead

works,... and eternal judgment,” (Heb 6:1,2). Paul continually struggled against heretics, including those “who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and thus they upset the faith of some,” (2 Tim 2:18).

The contrast between the common belief in the resurrection and that of the Sadducees was striking, and one that Paul would capitalize on in his defense as he was being accused by the high priest Ananias and some Jewish elders before Governor Felix of stirring up dissension “among all the Jews throughout the world” (Acts 24:5): “I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, **that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.** In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men... Let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council, other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, ‘For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today,’” Acts 24:14-21.

Jesus himself was questioned by the Sadducees concerning the resurrection of the dead, as recorded by three of the gospels: “Some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Him and questioned Him, saying, ‘Teacher, Moses said, “If a man dies, having no children, his brother as next of kin shall marry his wife, and raise up an offspring to his brother.” Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother; so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. And last of all, the woman died. In the resurrection therefore whose wife of the seven shall she be? For they all had her,’” Matt 22:23-28.

The intent of the Sadducees, however, was not to learn, but to corner and entrap Jesus. Their own firmly held belief that there was no resurrection blinded them to even consider there is a resurrection and that it is God himself who will bring it about, and indeed, who would determine the resulting manifestation of that resurrection, as Jesus set straight in his answer: “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven. But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I AM the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? **God is not the God of the dead but of the living,**” Matt 22:29-32.

The assertion has been made in this study that each of God’s major works are accomplished over three manifestations, as a signature reflecting God’s very nature. Is it true for the Work of the Resurrection of the Righteous Dead? Are there three distinct manifestations marking this work? Could Paul be telling us the resurrection of the righteous dead occurs over an order of three distinct events? – “As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive; **but each in his own order:** Christ the first fruits, after that, those who are Christ’s at His coming, then, (at) the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father...” 1 Cor 15:22-24. Let’s explore the details of these three events, and see how the resurrection of the righteous fits within each.

## ***God Calls the Righteous from out of the Grave***

### ***FIRST: The Righteous Son, Christ the First Fruits***

*“All shall be made alive, but each in his own order: [1] Christ the first fruits...” 1 Cor 15:21*

Jesus had been teaching his disciples that “the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days **rise again**,” (Mark 8:31). Mark relays that Jesus “was stating the matter plainly,” (vs 32). Then, with unrivaled audacity, Peter “took Him aside and began to rebuke Him”! (vs 32) In response to this, Jesus uttered the famous words, “Get thee behind Me, Satan”! (v 33 KJV) After all, this was the great work he came to do!

Following Jesus’ transfiguration on “a high mountain” (Mk 9:2), when he displayed to Peter, James and John what he would look like in “the kingdom of God after it has come with power” (v 1), he ordered them “not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man should **rise from the dead**,” (v 9). Mark tells us they “seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what ‘*rising from the dead*’ might mean,” (v 10).

While Jesus did often speak in parables and riddles, there were times when he “stat(ed) the matter plainly” – and this was one of them. Yet the disciples befuddled themselves trying to figure out what this supposed riddle meant: “The Son of Man is to be delivered up into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, **He will rise again three days later**,” (Mark 9:31). The fact was, there was no riddle there at all; he was indeed speaking plainly. Nevertheless, as Mark writes, “They did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him,” (v 32).

To others, such as those of the Jewish leadership, who asked him, “What sign do You show us?” to prove his authority (John 2:18), Jesus riddled, “Destroy this temple, and in three days **I will raise it up**,” (v 19). Those Jews thought he was talking about the temple buildings, but “He was speaking of the temple of His body,” (v 21). John reveals that “when therefore (Jesus) was raised from the dead, (the) disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken,” (v 22).

After his resurrection he appeared to the disciples, and “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,” (Luke 24:45). This is what he said: “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,” Luke 24:46. While the suffering of Messiah was prophesied explicitly by Isaiah, especially in Isaiah chapter 53, Jesus’ assertion that the Scriptures taught the Christ would rise again “the third day” is most likely pointing to the prophecy of Hosea 6:1-2, in a dual reference to Judah the Nation, and Judah the Man: “The LORD has torn (Me), but He will heal (Me); He has

wounded (Me), but He will bandage (Me). He will revive (Me) after two days; He will raise (Me) up on the third day that (I) may live before Him.”

Jesus also pointed to the figure of Jonah, when “some of the scribes and Pharisees (demanded), ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You’” (Matt 12:38). He answered, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (vs 39,40); the implication being that just as Jonah was “vomited... up onto the dry land” after three days, so that the Lord said, “Arise... and proclaim... the proclamation which I am going to tell you” (Jonah 2:10; 3:2), so Jesus himself would “arise” from the earth, even though “its bars (had seemed to be) around (him) forever” (Jonah 2:6), telling his disciples “that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations” (Luke 24:47). (The prayer of Jonah)

Despite the plain teaching of Jesus that he would be killed and then rise again, on the day the women “who had come with Him out of Galilee” came to his tomb, and “found the stone rolled away,” they were “perplexed” that his body was missing! (Luke 23:55; 24:1-4) Two angels appeared to them and said, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Luke 24:5-7). Luke records, “And they remembered His words” (v 8).

In this one statement by the angels is proclaimed the two great works of Christ: In his death the work of redemption is accomplished, and in his rising from the dead begins the work of his resurrection of the righteous. As Jesus declared, “I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father,” John 10:17-18.

His resurrection was the “first fruits” of the resurrection of the righteous dead: “Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep... In Christ all shall be made alive, but each in his own order: Christ the first fruits...” 1 Cor 15:20-23. “Jesus Christ (is) the firstborn of the [righteous] dead,” Rev 1:5. The ripe and flowing first fruits of a harvest were the promise that a bountiful reaping would follow. By his death we are made alive spiritually, and by his rising we have a promise that we also will be raised physically.

This is the primacy of the gospel “by which (we) are saved”, according to Paul: “I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,” 1 Cor 15:1-4.

“And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,” Acts 4:33. For if we “believe in (our) heart that God raised Him from the dead, (we) shall be saved,” Rom 10:9.

## ***God Calls the Righteous from out of the Grave***

### **SECOND: Those Who Are Christ's at His Coming**

*"In Christ all shall be made alive, but each in his own order: [1] Christ the first fruits, after that [2] those who are Christ's at his coming..." 1 Cor 15:21-23*

Christ appears three times: first to redeem, after that to rapture, and then to rule. He came, he is coming, and he will come again. He is "the Alpha and Omega... who is, and who was and who is to come... the Almighty" (Rev 1:8). He is "the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth," (v 5). He is "Holy, Holy, Holy, the LORD, God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come," (Rev 4:8). He is the reflection and the appearing of the triune God -- the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost: "He who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me," (Jn 12:45). His works are accomplished over three manifestations as a witness to his very nature as God.

Each appearing of Christ is marked by a resurrection – his first appearing culminated in his own resurrection, being raised from the dead as "the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Cor 15:20). His second appearing will also be marked by a resurrection, as Paul revealed to the Thessalonians:

"If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus; for this we say,... that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep, for the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout,... and **the dead in Christ shall rise first**. The we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord," 1 Thess 4:14-17.

Just as Christ was raised to a glorified spiritual body, so shall the dead in Christ be raised to a body of glory: "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection," Rom 6:5. As Paul told the Corinthians: "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. **So also is the resurrection of the (righteous) dead**. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body... Just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly," 1 Cor 15:41-44.

When Jesus comes back to take us to his Father's house, catching us up to ever be with him, he will first raise the righteous dead, so that "the dead (in Christ) will be raised imperishable, and we shall (all) be changed," (1 Cor 15:52).

## ***God Calls the Righteous from out of the Grave***

### **THIRD: The Tribulation Saints at the End, When Christ Presents His Kingdom to the Father**

*“In Christ all shall be made alive, but each in his own order: [1] Christ the first fruits, after that [2] those who are Christ’s at his coming, then [3] (at) the end, when he delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when he has abolished all rule and all authority and power.” 1 Cor 15:22-24*

As has been asserted in the previous section, each appearance of Christ, also asserted to total three, is marked by a resurrection. His first appearing culminated with his own resurrection, and Paul reveals that when Christ comes again to take us to his father’s house, “the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thess 4:16), that is, “those who are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor 15:23) “will be raised imperishable” (v 52). The passage that details the “order” of the resurrection of the righteous, 1 Corinthians 15:22-24, seems to suggest three events of the resurrection of the righteous dead: Christ himself, then those who are his at his coming, and finally, at “the end, when he delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father.” In other words, when Christ “restor(es) the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6).

Is there then a resurrection described in Scripture that takes place at the same time as Christ’s ‘third’ coming, when he comes “with power and great glory” (Matt 24:30) to “set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed” (Dan 2:44)? The most likely place in the Bible to look for such an event would be in Revelation, where Christ is described as coming to earth sitting on “a white horse”, “judg(ing) and wag(ing) war” so as to “smite the nations, and... rule them with a rod of iron” having “tread() the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty” (Rev 19:11-15).

Following Christ’s return to earth to seize “the beast... and... the false prophet” and “kill with the sword” the “armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse” (vs 19-21), we read that Satan is “bound... for a thousand years” (Rev 20:2), and then we read this, from John’s vision of the end:

“I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; **and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years,**” Rev 20:4.

Then we read: “The rest of the dead [those who had worshiped the beast] did not come to life [i.e., were not resurrected] until the thousand years were completed. **This is the**



**first resurrection.** Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power; but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years,” Rev 20:5,6.

This thousand years is what is known as the *Millennium*, or the Thousand Year Reign of Christ. It is what was prophesied by Jesus himself in Matthew 24, and what Daniel saw in his visions in Babylon: “And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed,” Dan 7:13,14.

The “first resurrection” of Revelation is the resurrection of the righteous dead, while there will be a second resurrection that will take place after “the thousand years (are) completed.” This is the same two resurrections that John records Jesus describing: “An hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live... (And) the Father... gave to the Son... authority to execute judgment.... For an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds, to **a resurrection of life**, those who committed the evil deeds to a **resurrection of judgment**,” John 5:25-29.

John describes what he saw in a vision of this resurrection of judgment, after the first resurrection took place and the thousand years kingdom was completed: “And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it... And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

“And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire,” Rev 20:11-15.

The first resurrection is a work of God through Christ, and as such, is accomplished over three manifestations: Christ’s resurrection as the first fruits, then at the rapture, when he comes to take his own to his father’s house, and finally at the end, when he delivers the kingdom to his Father by setting up his dominion over the nations and rules for a thousand years.

The Works of God are accomplished over three manifestations as a signature and reflection of God’s very nature.

## Six Works of God

### III. He Cleanses (in the Washing of the Saints)

Washing was a major requirement of the Mosaic Law, a ritual necessary for the high priest to perform on the Day of Atonement before entering the most holy place: “(The high priest) shall put on the holy linen tunic... (But first) he shall bathe his body in water and (then) put them on... Then he shall... bring (the) blood inside the veil,” Lev 16:4,15.

Washing was necessary before any of the priests presented themselves before the Lord: “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, **for washing**; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar (of burning), and you shall put water in it. And Aaron and his sons shall **wash their hands and their feet** from it; when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, **that they may not die**; or when they approach the altar to minister, by offering up on smoke a fire sacrifice to the LORD. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they may not die; and it shall be a perpetual statute for them, for Aaron and his descendants throughout their generations,” Exodus 30:17-21.

Aaron and his descendants were the priests who served daily within the “tent of meeting” behind the first veil<sup>9</sup> of the tabernacle itself, “continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the divine worship,” Heb 9:6. Within this outer tabernacle “were the lampstand and the table (holding) the sacred bread” and just in front of the “second veil... (stood) a golden altar of incense,” (vs 2-4; see Ex 30:6). The priests needed to be washed and clean before entering in through the veil to perform the daily service.

Peter likens Christians to this Levitical priesthood, but in a spiritual sense: “You, also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ,” 1 Pet 2:5. In the letter to the Hebrews, the writer refers figuratively to our approach to God, asserting it must involve having “bodies washed with pure water”: “Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,... and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our **bodies washed with pure water**,” Heb 10:19-22.

**Washing represents forgiveness of sins:** “Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions. **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin...** Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me,” Psalm 51:1,2,7,10.

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<sup>9</sup> maw-sawk' 4539 New BDBG Hebrew-English Lexicon “covering,screen”; -- 2. Name given (in P) to each of three screens of tabernacle: a. at gate of court Ex 27:16, 35:17, 38:18, 39:40, 40:8,33, Nu 3:26, 4:26; b. at entrance of tent Ex 26:36,37, 35:15, 36:37, 39:38, 40:5,28, Nu 3:25,31, 4:25; c. dividing off the Most Holy Place within the tent, Ex 35:12, 39:34, 40:21, Nu 4:5.

As Paul retold the story of his conversion, he relayed how Ananias came to him, saying, “The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear an utterance from His mouth... And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and **wash away your sins**, calling on His name,” Acts 22:14-16.

John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of Messiah, preaching, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” (Matt 3:2), and the people were “being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins,” (v 6). As he did so, he proclaimed, “I baptize you in water for repentance,” (v 11). The physical act of being baptized by John was a public declaration of a personal confession of and repentance from sin, and at the same time a witness of being forgiven, cleansed, of those sins by God through that repentance, by demonstrating faith that God is merciful and forgiving.

This is just as David proclaimed, believing that God would hear the confessions of a sinner who by faith calls on His name: “Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions. **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity**, and **cleanse me from my sin**. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight, so that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak, and blameless when Thou dost judge... Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; **wash me and I shall be whiter than snow**... Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities,” Ps 51:1-9.

As Paul affirmed: “With the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and **with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation**. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for ‘Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved,’” Rom 10:10-13.

Isaiah admonished Israel to turn back from their abandonment of the Lord, for having “despised the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away from Him,” Isaiah 1:4. His answer from God for them was to be cleansed: “**Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean**; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless; defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

“‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool. If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.’ Truly the mouth of the LORD has spoken,” Is 1:16-20.

Cleansing is the promise God makes to Israel at the time of the end: “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then **I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean**; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols... And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God,” Ezekiel 36:24-28.

## ***God Cleanses the Saints***

### ***FIRST: The Whole Bath of Salvation unto Righteousness***

*“He who has bathed... is completely clean; and you are clean...” John 13:10*

Jesus performed a perplexing, unprecedented ritual during the Last Supper with his disciples, the night before he was to go to the cross. John records that Jesus “rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, girded Himself about. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded,” John 13:4,5.

John tells us that when Jesus got to Peter, that disciple, whose name meant “a stone”, questioned Jesus’ actions, saying, “Lord, do You wash my feet?” (v 6). Jesus answered, “What I do you do not realize now; but you shall understand thereafter” (v 7). Now, instead of accepting that Jesus was attempting to present and establish an object lesson for them, Peter instead overreacted, declaring, “Never shall You wash my feet!” With patience, Jesus replied, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me” (v 8).

Overreaction seemed to be Peter’s go to move, as he then responded: “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head”! (v 9), essentially, asking to get an entire ceremonial bath! Jesus then begins to reveal a sliver of the understanding of the mystery of the foot washing, as he makes this simple, yet profound statement:

**“He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean...”** (v 10). Later that evening, Jesus expanded the statement with this: “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you,” John 15:3.

The setting of these events was the night just prior to Christ’s being lifted up on the cross. Jesus had been telling his disciples that he would be “delivered up to the Gentiles (to) be mocked and mistreated and... kill(ed)” (Luke 18:32), but they did not understand. By the next day, they would understand that what he had been telling them was exactly what was to happen. And when he rose again, and appeared to them, he again reminded them that all of that was in fulfillment of the Scriptures:

“These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled... Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead... and that **repentance for forgiveness of sins** should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations,” Luke 24:44-47.

In fulfillment of Jesus’ promise, after he had returned to heaven, the Holy Spirit was sent to the disciples to “giv(e) them utterance” (Acts 2:4). The Spirit would now “teach (them) all things, and bring to (their) remembrance all that (Jesus) said to (them)”

according to Jesus' promise (John 14:2). As he told them, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning," (John 15:26,27).

And so the disciples, now filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost according to the promise, began to remember, understand, and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, despite being "uneducated and untrained men" (Acts 4:13). Peter, who had repeatedly rebuked Jesus, now preached Jesus: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you (Jewish officials) had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and Savior, **to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins**. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him" (Acts 5:30-32).

Even Paul, who as Jewish zealot Saul had been ferociously persecuting the early followers of Jesus, now a convert to the Way, preached the gospel of Christ's redemption by his sacrifice on the cross: "From the offspring of (David), according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel... Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and to those among you who fear God, to us the word of this salvation is sent out... **that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed** from all things," Acts 13:23-26,38,39.

Now with the preaching of the gospel of repentance and forgiveness through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' words to his disciples were being made clear through Paul: "**You were washed...** (and) you were **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor 6:11. As Paul wrote to Titus: "When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the **washing of regeneration** and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior," Titus 3:4-6. According to Paul, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death," Rom 8:1,2.

Those who believe in Christ's work of redemption on the cross, "(Christ) Himself (being) the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2), are collectively members of his body, his Church, for whom he "gave Himself up... that He might sanctify her, **having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,**" Eph 5:25,26. That word is the saving gospel.

Jesus' words were now understood: "**He who has bathed... is completely clean; and you are clean.**" All who believe in Jesus have had a whole bath of salvation unto declared righteousness, are completely forgiven of sins, past, present and future relative to the condemnation of death and hell. According to Jesus' words, they need not take that bath again, but need only to "wash his feet" to have a "part with" him.

If the "bath" Jesus spoke about is the once for all cleansing of sins unto salvation, what did Jesus mean when he said, "If I do not wash (your feet), you have no part with Me"?

## **God Cleanses the Saints**

### **SECOND: The Foot Washing unto Fellowship**

*“If I do not wash (your feet), you have no part with Me... He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean...” John 13:10*

Washing was an important ritual of the temple. Before the priests could enter the “tent of meeting”, they needed to wash their hands and feet at the laver of washing (Ex 30:17) so as to be considered clean before God. Likewise, as Christians, those who are “sanctified” (Heb 10:14), we “have confidence to enter the holy place..., having our hearts sprinkled clean... and our bodies washed with pure water” (vs 19,22).

According to Hebrews 8:5, the earthly temple and its priestly ministries were only a “copy and shadow of the heavenly things.” More explicitly stated, the “holy place made with hands” – the earthly temple -- was a “copy of the true one” in “heaven itself” (Heb 9:24). That is why Moses “was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle..., ‘See... that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain,’” (Heb 8:5). It follows, then, that the “regulations of divine worship (in) the earthly sanctuary” (Heb 9:1) were picturing the divine worship performed by the priests appointed to that ministry in the heavenly one.

While the Levitical priests “continually enter(ed) the outer tabernacle, performing (this earthly) divine worship,” (Heb 9:6), Christ “appeared as a high priest... (and) entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation... (He) entered the holy place (in heaven) once for all, having obtained eternal redemption,” (vs 11,12). He obtained that redemption through having “offered Himself without blemish to God” (v14), having “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (v26). Christ entered “to appear in the presence of God for us,” (v24), and is a “minister in the (heavenly) sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man,” (Heb 8:2).

Peter says the saints in Christ are “a holy priesthood, (appointed) to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God” (1 Pet 2:5), including “proclaim(ing) the excellencies of Him who has called (us) out of darkness into His marvelous light;... (and) keep(ing our) behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so... they may on account of (our) good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation” (vs 9,12).

This priesthood status is why we “have confidence to enter the holy place, (through the right granted) by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh” (Heb 10:19,20). The writer goes on: “And since we have a great priest over the (tabernacle) of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our

bodies washed with pure water” (vs 21,22). As Peter made clear, passing “through water, (such as in) baptism”, is really an “appeal to God for a good conscience” – by confession, repentance, and His forgiveness -- made possible “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 3:20-22).

Believers in Christ are “cleanse(d)... from dead works to serve the living God” by “the blood of Christ” (Heb 9:14). He had “offered one sacrifice for sins for all time,... (and by that) one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Heb 10:12, 14). This once for all sacrifice was pictured by “the Law (sacrifices), since it (was) a shadow of the good things to come” (Heb 10:1). The Law involved “sacrifices year by year, which they offer(ed) continually,... the blood of bulls and goats” (vs 1, 4), a reminder that, “according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb 9:22).

As John tells us, we are “released... from our sins by (Christ’s) blood” (Rev 1:5). And so the cleansing unto redemption once for all is through his blood, as we are reminded by the sign of the covenant, the drinking of the cup of communion, a picture of his blood, and the eating of the bread, a reminder of his body placed on the cross, the rituals of which Christ instituted the night of the Last Supper. It is the “bath” of salvation; as Jesus told his disciples that night, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is (already) completely clean” (John 13:10). This cleansing is a metaphor for the forgiveness that comes from repentance and calling on God for mercy.

But just as the priests were already sanctified by the “blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who had been defiled,... for the cleansing of the flesh” (Heb 9:13), still they were obligated to wash their feet with water before entering the tent of meeting through the veil, so as to be ritually clean and able to perform the services of “divine worship” within the “outer tabernacle” (Heb 9:6).

And so likewise, while we Christians, as members of a royal priesthood, have been sanctified forever by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ unto eternal redemption, we must also be washed – have our feet washed – before performing the “spiritual sacrifices” within the veil of the holy place in the heavenly sanctuary. As Jesus said, “If I do not wash (your feet), you have no part with Me” (John 13:8).

After Jesus had “washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at table again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you?’” (John 13:12). Clearly they knew what he did to them – washed their feet -- but at the same time they had no idea why he did it, nor what it meant. After all, Jesus himself had already prefaced his actions by saying, “What I do you do not realize now; but you shall understand hereafter” (v 7).

Many of the events found in the gospels are recorded by more than one writer. The feeding of the five thousand is recorded by all four gospels. The feeding of the four thousand is reported by Matthew and Mark, but not by Luke or John<sup>10</sup>. It is interesting that the passage of Jesus washing the disciples feet was only recorded by John. The

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<sup>10</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feeding\\_the\\_multitude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feeding_the_multitude)

Apostle John had a special relationship to Jesus, referring to himself as “the disciple whom He loved” (John 19:26). Perhaps John was the only disciple who understood. Perhaps he should be the writer to turn to, then, when looking for the explanation as to what it meant to have Jesus “wash our feet”.

Four of the last five books of the bible were written by John. The very first letter written by John following his last of the gospels is The First Epistle of John. He concludes his gospel writing with the account of the Last Supper events, and then the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, and he begins his very next letter with this: “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life... we proclaim to you also, that you may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete,” 1 John 1:1-4.

What John is now going to write is a spiritual guide as to how we “may have fellowship”, with each other, with the Father, and with the Son. But first he establishes that “God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:4).

Following this statement, he writes: “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth...” (v 6). What is John revealing here? That we Christians, redeemed and sanctified and eternally saved, can be out of fellowship with God, if we are walking in the darkness -- if we are willingly, purposely sinning. We can “say” we have fellowship with God and Jesus and each other, but it would be a “lie.” We may be redeemed, saved, and in an adopted son relationship with God the Father, but our fellowship with him can be broken, and we have become a prodigal son.

John then gives us the alternate scenario to that: “But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, (because) the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (v 7). In other words, if it is the sincere desire of our heart to do what is right, to stay close to him, to follow his commandments, then those sins we inadvertently commit, will be cleansed by Jesus, and our fellowship will be maintained with the Father, with the Son, and with each other.

Now if we are sinning willfully, and “say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (v 8). But there is a solution to that situation. John tells us what we must do to restore our fellowship with our Father: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (v9). Recognize our willful sin, confess and repent, and God will forgive, and our fellowship will be restored. But according to John, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (v 10). We all have sinned, and none of us attain to a state of sinless perfection short of the resurrection.

John reveals the Agent of the cleansing unto fellowship: “My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. (But) if anyone sins, **we have an Advocate with the Father**, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our



sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world,” 1 John 2:1,2. As our High Priest, Jesus is the Mediator between us and God: “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,” 1 Tim 2:5.

This concept of Jesus as our Advocate and Mediator before God gives insight to Jesus’ words, “If I do not wash (your feet), you have no part with me.” It is about being clean, and that is figurative for being forgiven. We take a bath of salvation, cleansed once for all unto redemption and relationship. It is a great work of God accomplished through Jesus. After that, if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, “the blood of Jesus His Son (keeps on continually) cleans(ing) us from all sin” relative to fellowship. And if we sin willfully, we have an Advocate who is willing to “cleanse us from all unrighteousness”, restoring us to fellowship, if we are willing to “confess our sins” and turn away from the darkness and return to the light.

Jesus spiritually stands up from his seated position at the right hand of the Father, removes his garment, girds a towel about him, and stoops to wash our feet, so our fellowship with the Father, with him, and with each other, may be maintained or restored. It is a great work of cleansing of the saints unto fellowship. This cleansing is what gives us the “confidence to enter the holy place..., (allowing) us (to) draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, (having had) our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:19,22).

Just as there was “a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread... called the holy place”, having within it before “the second veil... a golden altar of incense” into which “the priests (were) continually entering..., performing the divine worship” (Heb 9:2-4,6), so we can be cleansed and thereby enter the holy place in heaven, to keep the lamp stand of witness burning bright with the oil of Holy Spirit power, to consume the Bread of His Presence, the Word, with understanding, and to burn the incense of prayer, in praise, thanks and petition.

There is a warning given by Paul relative to partaking of the “Lord’s Supper”: “Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. (So) let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged,” 1 Cor 11:27-31.

Examining ourselves before we eat and drink, gives us the chance to have Jesus wash our feet, so we might partake in a worthy manner. Considering the words of Jesus as recorded in John 13:13-17 may also be of benefit: “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you... If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

## **God Cleanses the Saints**

### **THIRD: The Transforming Purification unto Glory**

*“We all, ... beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit...” 2 Corinthians 3:18*

Jesus engaged in three distinct actions with his disciples the night before he was to be crucified: 1) He shared the cup of blessing and the bread of the body of Christ (1 Cor 10:16), what some call the “Lord’s Supper”, 2) He washed the disciples’ feet, and 3) He ate a last meal with them, what is known as the “Last Supper.”

The institution of the sharing of the bread and the cup as a Christian ordinance or sacrament is recorded by Luke this way: “(Jesus) reclined at (the supper) table, and the apostles with Him... And having taken some bread, when He had given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; **do this in remembrance of Me.**’ And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is [a sign of] the new covenant in My blood” (Luke 22:14,19,20). As Matthew records it, Jesus said, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is to be shed on behalf of many for forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28).

Jesus compared this forgiveness of sins that comes through his shed blood to a bath, when he told the disciples that night, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean, and you are clean...” (John 13:10). As he said a little later that night, “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you” (John 15:3). That word is the gospel of salvation, as Jesus had preached to the people, saying, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, **and he who believes in Me** shall never thirst... For this is the will of My Father, that every one who beholds the Son, and **believes in Him**, may have eternal life... He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life... For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink” (John 6:35,40,54,55).

Eating his flesh and drinking his blood is a metaphor for believing in him, as he said: “Truly, truly, I say to you, **he who believes** has eternal life” (John 6:47). What is it they are to believe? As Jesus’ disciples affirmed, “Lord... you have the words of eternal life. And **we have believed** and have come to know that **You are the Holy One of God**” (John 6:68,69). This is what Peter had declared, when Jesus had asked, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt 16:15). Peter answered, “**Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God**” (v 16). As Paul told the Romans, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus (is) Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes... and with the mouth he confesses” (Rom 10:9,10).

As we share in the bread and the cup of communion, we are celebrating the past, once for all cleansing work of Jesus as our Savior unto redemption, which brings eternal life, by remembering his death in sacrifice, a sacrifice that “released us from our sins by His blood” (Rev 1:5). This is what Paul taught, in writing to the Corinthians: “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you; **do this in remembrance of Me.**’ In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; **do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.**’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes,” (1 Cor 11:23-26).

The foot washing Jesus performed on the disciples that same night during the supper is a picture of the present, on-going work of the daily cleansing of Jesus for us as our Advocate unto fellowship, as we walk in the light, committing unintentional sins, or as we confess our willful sins in repentance. As Jesus told them, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me... He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet” (John 13:9,10). John taught that “the blood of Jesus (God’s) Son (keeps on continually) cleans(ing) us from all sin” as we “walk in the light as He Himself is in the light” so that we might “have fellowship with one another” (1 John 1:7), or, that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (v 9) so as to restore our fellowship “with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” and to ensure “that (we) may have fellowship with (each other)” (v 3).

Some believers follow Jesus’ example literally, by washing each others’ feet as part of the communion service, according to his instructions: “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (John 13:13-17).

Doing so gives opportunity to remember Christ’s on-going, present work of cleansing, and it gives opportunity to examine oneself before sharing the bread and the cup, as Paul recommended: “Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged” (1 Cor 11:27-31).

Finally, during the supper itself, Jesus took a cup, and gave thanks, and said, “Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes” (Luke 22:17,18). This sharing of the cup, as part of this last supper, looks forward to the time when the “marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready” (Rev 19:7). This is a time when “the

voice of a great multitude” will be heard, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him” (Rev 19:6,7).

At this marriage there is also a “supper”: “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb’” (v 9). This supper is in the kingdom of God “in heaven” (v 1), and the bride is the church: “Christ... is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body... Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her... Christ (loves) the church, because we are members of His body. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church” (Eph 5:23,25,29-32).

The bride “has made herself ready” for the marriage supper because “it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean” (Rev 19:8). This is the preparation for the supper that Jesus performs for his church: “That He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless” (Eph 5:25-27).

In the early church, believers would gather and partake of a meal as part of “the Lord’s Supper” (1 Cor 11:20), but in the church in Corinth, they had defiled that supper by “each one tak(ing) his own supper first; and one (would be) hungry and another (got) drunk”! (v 21). The practice of eating a meal with the Lord’s Supper soon fell out of favor, with the abuses and admonition of Paul: “Do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you?... So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment” (1 Cor 11:22,33,34).

Some groups still practice what they call a “three-fold communion”, during which they wash each other’s feet, share a simple common meal together, called a “Love Feast”, and then share the eucharistic bread and cup. The sharing of a meal is a reminder of the future marriage supper of the Lamb, when the church will be cleansed unto glorification so we may have perfect fellowship face to face with our Bridegroom.

It will be a time when we have been “raised imperishable, (having been) changed” (1 Cor 15:52), and “we shall... bear the image of the heavenly” (v 49). It will be when “the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body... knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus...” (2 Cor 4:10,14).

As John wrote: “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And every one who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:2,3).

So Christ cleanses us with his past work of Redemption, he cleanses us in the present unto Fellowship, and he will cleanse us in the future unto Glorification at the resurrection of the righteous.

## Six Works of God

### IV. He Collects (in the Gathering of Israel to the Land)

*“He has made known to His people **the power of His works**, in giving them the heritage of the nations,”* Psalm 111:6

The book known as the Bible is about God’s dealings with mankind through a chosen family on the earth, the sons of Jacob, re-named Israel, and the land he gave them to possess and live upon, with its capital the city of Jerusalem. Through these people, known as the Jews, comes a Savior of the world, fulfilling the promise to Abraham that “in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 22:18). Then, according to the prophecies of the book, one day this Jewish Savior would return to rule the earth as King of Israel, from his father David’s throne in Jerusalem. At that time “He will build the temple of the LORD... and He ( ) will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne” Zech 6:12,13.

In that day “the LORD will be king over all the earth... Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site... And people will live in it, and there will be no more curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in safety... Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations... will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths” Zech 14:9,10,11,16.

Even that part of the Bible we call the New Testament is about the Jews who accepted Jesus as this promised Messiah and King, the prophesied Son of Man and at the same time the Son of God the King of the Universe, going out into all the world to tell the nations how they can also be saved through the Jewish Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. As they do, a chosen Jewish Apostle reveals the Mystery that the collective Gentile believers in the Jewish Messiah form a special group who are considered the foreign Bride of the King, much like Ruth, a Moabitess, who married into the nation to become the grandmother of King David.

The end of the book culminates in the return of the King to claim his rightful position over the kingdom and destroy the wicked usurpers who had tried to overcome his righteous servants and take his inheritance in waging war against Jerusalem. He returns with his Bride and all his holy servants to set up the kingdom and build his temple.

In order to accomplish all of this, God made an iron-clad promise to the father of Isaac and his son Jacob, that Israel’s offspring would never “cease from being a nation before (Him) forever” (Jer 31:36), and that they would “possess the land forever, the branch of My planting, **the work of My hands**, that I may be glorified” (Isa 60:21). As He decreed through Daniel the prophet, at the time the King comes, “the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come” (Dan 7:18).

This promise of possession of the land was first made to Israel's grandfather, Abraham, while he was still a stranger in the land, having traveled to Canaan from Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 11:31), following the leading of God: "Go forth from your country... to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation... To your descendants I will give this land" (Gen 12:1,2,7).

But neither Abraham, nor his son Isaac, nor his son's son Jacob, ever possessed all the land personally, and none of them saw their descendants become a great nation. As Hebrews tells us: "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow-heirs of the same promise... These died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance" Heb 11:8,9,13.

Nevertheless, the promise that their "descendants" would be given the land "forever" (Gen 13:15) and that they would live in it and "possess" it in a physical sense remained true. God himself would bring it about, but it would appear to be against all odds, and at times, it would appear to be against the very will of the descendants themselves that He would bring them into the land so as to possess what was given to them.

In fact, at times they were cast out and exiled from the land as a judgment from God, but in order to fulfill his promise, each time they were exiled God collected them and brought them back, for the purpose of proving he was faithful to his promises: "I will take you from the nations, gather you from the lands, and bring you into your own land... I am not doing this for your sake... (But to) vindicate the holiness of My great name... because it was said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD, yet they have come out of His land,'" (Ezk 36:24,32,23,20).

Three times God collected the exiled children of Jacob, and brought them into the land he had given them by covenant promise to their father Abraham. **Three times**, as a signature of his Work in gathering them together to possess the promised inheritance. And once he has completed his work of gathering them for a third time, he makes good on the promise by prophets that "I will cause men – My people Israel – to walk on you and possess you, so that you will become their inheritance, and **never again** bereave them of children... nor will you cause your nation to stumble **any longer**" (Ezk 36:12,15).

The Work God performs in bringing Israel back into their land is to prove himself before the nations: "(When) they will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate, and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.' Then the nations... will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it" (Ezk 36:35,36).

Despite the efforts of men to drive Israel into the sea<sup>11</sup>, God has promised to never allow his people to "bear disgrace from the (nations) any longer" (Ezk 36:15).

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.algemeiner.com/2014/02/20/did-arab-states-really-promise-to-push-jews-into-the-sea-yes/>

## **God Collects Israel**

### **FIRST: Out of Egypt**

*“Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years... Then in the fourth generation they shall return here... To your descendants I have given this land,” Genesis 15:13,16,18*

The original promise made to Abraham by God that his descendants would possess the land was turned into a sworn covenant by God after Abram questioned him, by saying, “O Lord GOD, how may I know that I shall possess it?” (Gen 15:8). In response, God inaugurated the covenant by having Abram slaughter and cut into two pieces a three year old heifer, a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and then God himself “passed between the pieces,” and repeated the promise that his descendants had been given the land (Gen 15:17,18).

But God also conveyed an ominous warning: “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will judge the nations whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions... Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete” (Gen 15:13,14,16).

The Lord repeated the promise of the covenant to Abraham’s son Isaac: “Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham... I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give (them) all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 26:3,4).

The Lord also repeated the promise to Isaac’s son Jacob: “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 28:13,14).

Within this reprise of the promise, God also intimates the promise of return: “I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you” (Gen 28:15). This promise of return, should Jacob’s descendants ever leave the land, is a logical condition of the original promise, as expressed by Isaac to Jacob as he left for Paddan-aram: “May (God) give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you; that may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham” (Gen 28:4).

God had essentially obligated himself to bring Jacob's descendants back to the land should they ever leave, so that he could fulfill the promise that they would inherit the land and possess it. He himself would need to bring this about. This logical imperative was expressed in the warning he had given to Abraham that his descendants would be "strangers in a land that is not theirs", but that surely they "shall return", even providing a timetable: after four hundred years.

For Jacob himself, his twenty years in servitude to his cheating father-in-law Laban came to a bitter conclusion, as Laban's sons turned belligerent and angry at Jacob's prosperity (Gen 31:1,2). So God said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you" (Gen 31:3). This scenario would be played out for Jacob's descendants for the first time as they traveled to Egypt to escape a famine that had gripped the land, setting the prophecy given to Abraham into play. And Pharaoh welcomed Jacob's family -- as Laban had welcomed Jacob -- saying, "The land of Egypt is at your disposal; settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land, let them live in the land of Goshen..." (Gen 47:6).

The entire family of Jacob emigrated to Egypt: "These are the names of the sons of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt: Reuben,... Simeon,... Levi,... Judah,... Issachar,... Zebulun,... Gad,... Asher,... the sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin... and... Dan,... and Naphtali... All the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were seventy" (Gen 46:8-27). "And Joseph provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to their little ones, (even though) there was no food in the land" (Gen 47:12,13). Joseph took care of them.

Following the seven years of famine (Gen 41:29-31), "Israel... acquired property in (the land of Egypt, in Goshen) and were fruitful and became very numerous" (Gen 47:27). Yet despite that prosperity, and a mass family trip back to Canaan to bury Jacob "in (his fathers') burial place... in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the... land of Canaan, which Abraham bought... for a burial site,... purchased from the sons of Heth" (Gen 47:30; 49:29-32), it apparently never occurred to the descendants to take the opportunity to return to the land of Canaan!

On his death bed, Jacob blessed Joseph's two sons, and then said to Joseph, "I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers" (Gen 48:21). Jacob then proceeded to offer blessings of prophecy for each of his other sons, concluding with a grave request: "I am about to be gathered to my people; **bury me with my fathers... in the land of Canaan**" (Gen 49:29). And when he died, they did!

The procession from Egypt to Canaan was a magnificent affair: "So Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household and all the elders of the land of Egypt, and **all the household of Joseph and his brothers and his father's household**... There also went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company" (Gen 50:7-9).

Once they reached "the threshing floor of Atad, which is **beyond the Jordan**, they lamented there with a very great and sorrowful lamentation... seven days" (Gen 50:10).



The Canaanites were very impressed by the “grievous mourning,” and renamed the place “Abel-mizraim,” meaning “the mourning of Egypt”<sup>12</sup> (v 11).

Finally, Jacob and all his sons were back in the land of Canaan, the land God had promised to give to Israel’s descendants “for an everlasting possession” (Gen 48:4), and the land to which Jacob had made them promise they would carry him back when he died. The only problem was, the sons had “left... their little ones and their flocks and their herds in the land of Goshen” (Gen 50:8). So naturally, after the burial and appropriate time of mourning, they simply returned to Egypt, where in were their families and flocks and wealth and homes.

The last words of Jacob to Joseph: “Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers” (Gen 48:21). His last words to Joseph’s brothers: “Bury me with my fathers... in the land of Canaan” (Gen 49:29,30). One wonders if he might have meant, take me back, bury me there, and then stay there! Nevertheless, back in Egypt they stayed until all the brothers and “all that generation” had died (Ex 1:6), and “a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph” (Ex 1:8).

## Affliction Prompts Return

And so begins the book of the Exodus, where we read “the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them” Ex 1:7. Because of that great population and prosperity, the Egyptians “were in dread of the sons of Israel” (v 12) and devised a program of enslavement of the Hebrews, forcing them to “labor rigorously and (making) their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor” (vs 13,14).

So we read: “The sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. (And) God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them” Ex 2:23,24. The covenant God remembered compels him to “bring (them back) to the land which (He) swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and (to) give it to (them) for a possession,” Ex 6:8.

God’s reaction to their groaning of affliction was to raise up a prophet, Moses, who would lead them back: “God called to him... ‘Moses, Moses!... I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob... I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to **bring them up from that land** to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. And now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me,” Ex 3:4,6-9.

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<sup>12</sup> ABEL-MIZRAIM: It is interpreted by Septuagint, Vulgate, and the Peshito (followed by A. V.) as “Mourning of the Egyptians,” or “of Egypt”; <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/222-abel-mizraim>

## Recounting the Works

As Moses told the sons of Israel, before they crossed over Jordan, “I am not speaking with your sons who have not known and who have not seen the discipline of the LORD your God—His greatness, His mighty hand, and His outstretched arm, and **His signs and His works** which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land; and what He did to Egypt’s army, to its horses and its chariots, when He made the water of the Red Sea to engulf them while they were pursuing you, and the LORD completely destroyed them; and what He did to you in the wilderness until you came to this place; and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, among Israel—but **your own eyes have seen all the great work of the LORD which He did,**” Dt 11:2-7.

God told Moses to go to Pharaoh, and demand he let his people go, but Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice...? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go,” (Ex 5:2). Instead, he increased their workload, so that when Moses first came to the people and told them God was going to deliver them, “they did not listen to (him) on account of their despondency and cruel bondage” (Ex 6:9).

God then told Moses and Aaron to “work a miracle” before Pharaoh, by throwing down his staff so that it “became a serpent;” yet once again he “did not listen to them” (Ex 7:8-13). So then came the plagues: Moses “struck the water that was in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh... and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood... (for) seven days” (Ex 7:9,10,20,25). Pharaoh’s heart, however, was “stubborn” (Ex 7:14), and now for a third time he refused to “listen to them” (v 22).

God then brought upon the land the plagues of frogs (Ex 8:1-14), lice (vs 16-18), dog flies<sup>13</sup> (vs 20-31) and a “very severe pestilence on (Egyptian) livestock” (9:1-6). Each time, again, “**Pharaoh hardened his heart...** and (would) not let the people go” (Ex 8:32, *also* vs 15, 19 and 9:7). For a total of seven times Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let the people go. Following the fifth plague, that of boils, which broke out “with sores on man and beast through all the land of Egypt” (Ex 9:8-11), we read that finally “**the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart**” (v 12), so that once again “he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had (foretold) to Moses” (v 12 with reference to Ex 7:3). This fulfilled what God had spoken to Moses: “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart that I may multiply [i.e., increase] My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt” (Ex 7:3 – *see* Rom 9:17-23).

God then announced why he allowed the stubbornness of Egypt to continue: “If by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with [My full wrath of] pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. But, indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power, and **in order to proclaim My name through all the earth,**” (Ex 9:15,16).

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<sup>13</sup> The “flies” in Exodus derives from the root ערב (arav). Essentially, it conveys the idea of a swarm or a mixture of something, but does not specify the exact nature of the swarm. <http://library.eteacherbiblical.com/>

As Paul asserted to the Romans, “God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction... in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory... from among the Jews” (Rom 9:22-24).

And so to proclaim His name, and show His power, God multiplied his signs and wonders, by next sending the plague of hail (Ex 9:18-35), and then the plague of locusts (Ex 10:1-19), and then extreme darkness (vs 31-24). But each time, “the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was not willing to let them go” (v 27, and 9:35 and 10:20).

Finally came the last, when “all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the first-born of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the first-born of the cattle as well, (so that) there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt” (Ex 11:5,6). All who obeyed God’s instructions through Moses would be saved from the destruction: “Take some of the blood (of a lamb slain at twilight) and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it... -- it is the LORD’S Passover – the blood shall be a sign for you... (so that) when (the LORD) see(s) the blood (He) will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when (He) strike(s) the land of Egypt” Ex 12:7,11,13).

As vessels of mercy, the Hebrews who “bowed low and worshiped”, obeying the command of the Lord from Moses, were “spared” (Ex 12:27). And so they were to continue to “observe this event as an ordinance for (themselves) and (their) children forever” (v 24, 25). When Pharaoh and all the Egyptians arose, “there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead” (v 30). And the Egyptians “urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste... (And) the sons of Israel... plundered the Egyptians” (v 33,35,36). So we read, “Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came about at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt” (vs 40,41), fulfilling the word foretold by God to Abraham.

These signs and wonders were only beginning for the children of Israel! – “The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light” Ex 13:21. But God hardened Pharaoh’s heart so that he chased after them, cornering them at the sea, and God “swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided” Ex 14:21. The Egyptians chased them into the chasm, but after the Israelites had crossed, the sea “returned to its normal state... (and) the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea” (v 27). “Thus the LORD saved Israel... and the people feared the LORD” (v 31). So they sang, “The LORD is a warrior... working wonders” Ex 15:3,11.

The works of God continued – turning bitter water to sweet (Ex 15:25); providing bread from heaven (Ex 16:4), quails for meat (vs 12,13) and water from the rock (17:5), victory over Amalek (17:8-16), Arad (Num 21:3), the Amorites (vs 21-31), Bashan (vs 33-35) and the Midianites (31:1-12) – until the sons of Israel arrived in Moab at the boundary of the promised land, across the Jordan.

## Return is a Work of God

“Come and see the **works of God**, who is awesome in His deeds toward the sons of men: He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot...” Ps 66:5-6. This is how King David poetically recounted the passage of the Israelites across the Red Sea as they escaped from Pharaoh and the Egyptian army on their way back to Canaan. These works of power by God were to accomplish what he promised the sons of Israel according to the covenant made with their fathers:

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for under compulsion he shall let them go, and under compulsion he shall drive them out of his land... I am the LORD; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty [*El Shaddai*], but by My name, LORD [*YHWH*], I did not make Myself known to them. And I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. And furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage; and I have remembered My covenant.

“Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD’” Ex 6:1-8.

We are familiar with the plagues God then brought upon Egypt, as a demonstration to Pharaoh and his kingdom of God’s own sovereign power, as he instructed Moses: “You shall speak... to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders [i.e., **My works**] in the land of Egypt. When Pharaoh will not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt, and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. And **the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD**, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst,” Ex 7:2-5.

This is the ultimate purpose of God in performing his Works: to demonstrate his power and glory among the nations. He even told Israel, as they were about to cross over the Jordan to possess the promised land, “Know therefore today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy (the nations greater and mightier than you) and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and subdue them... (But) do not say in your heart..., ‘Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,’ but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you,” Dt 9:1-5.

The Works were to prove his faithfulness to his promises, and not because of Israel’s own good standing, as he told them on the shores of the Jordan: “The LORD your God is

driving (the nations) out before you, **in order to confirm the oath** which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Know then it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess... Yet (you) are (His) people, even (His) inheritance, whom (He) has brought out by (His) great power and (His) outstretched arm,” Dt 9:5,6,29.

This is what he declared to them: “The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but, because the LORD loved you and **kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers**, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, **the faithful God**, who **keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation** with those who love Him and keep His commandments,” Dt 7:6-9.

The Works of redeeming them from Egypt, guiding and protecting them through the wilderness wanderings, and finally bringing them into the land, were recounted by Moses before the people, and summed up with this declaration: “O Lord GOD, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth **who can do such works and mighty acts as Thine?**” Dt 3:24.

Moses continued his dissertation to his people: “Indeed, ask now concerning the former days which were before you, since the day that God created man on earth, and inquire from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything been done like this great thing, or has anything been heard like it? Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of fire, as you have heard it, and survived? Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

“To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him. Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire. Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power... to bring you in and to give you (the) land for an inheritance, as it is today,” Dt 4:32-37.

“For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God... (Who) executes justice... and shows His love... He is your praise and He is your God, who as done these great and awesome (works) for you which your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons in all, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven,” Dt 10:17,18,21,22.

Moses then warned, “If you will not obey the LORD... you shall be torn from the land” (Dt 28:15,63). But then came the great promise: “If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and... **bring you back,**” Dt 30:4.

## **God Collects Israel**

### **SECOND: Out of Babylon**

*“When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill my good word to you, to bring you back to this place,”* Jeremiah 29:10

After the death of Moses, God “spoke to Joshua... saying, ‘...Arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel” (Josh 1:1,2). And so Joshua led them across the Jordan on dry land, for God cut off the waters of the river until all had crossed (Josh 3:11-17). Then Joshua set up memorial stones and said to the sons of Israel: “When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, ‘What are these stones?’ then you shall inform your children, saying, ‘Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground.’ For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the LORD your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed; **that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty**, so that you may fear the LORD your God forever,” Josh 4:21-24. Again, we see the purpose for God performing his works on the earth, and in his people Israel, so that “all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty.”

The sons of Israel then proceeded to conquer the nations in the land of Canaan through the power of the Lord, until they possessed it, and came to be ruled by a king God had chosen, David, the son of Jesse. During his reign, “when the king lived in his house,... the LORD (gave) him rest on every side from all his enemies” (2 Sam 7:1). And we read, “So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people” (2 Sam 8:15).

His son Solomon ruled after him, enlarging the kingdom, “for he had dominion over everything west of the River, from Tiphseh even to Gaza, over all kings west of the River; and he had peace on all sides around about him. So Judah and Israel lived in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon... (And) God gave (him) wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind... for he was wiser than all men... and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations” (1 Kings 4:24,25,29,31).

Now God had made a promise to Solomon: “If you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever... **But if you or your sons shall indeed turn away from following Me, and shall not keep My commandments and My statutes... then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight... And this house will**

**become a heap of ruins; everyone who passes by will be astonished and hiss and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?'" And they will say, 'Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and adopted other gods and worshiped them and served them, therefore the LORD has brought all this adversity on them,'" 1 Kings 9:4-9.**

This really was simply a repeat of the promise of the blessing and the curse God had declared to Israel through Moses as the people prepared to cross into the promised land: "Now it shall be, if you will diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you... The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you... Do not turn aside from any of the words which I commanded you today,... to go after other gods to serve them.

"But it shall come about, if you will not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments..., that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you... The LORD will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly... And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a taunt among all the people where the LORD will drive you... and you shall be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it," Deut 28:1-63 *excerpts*.

The message God spoke to Israel is the same message he gives to all the world: "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity;... I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live... by loving... God,... and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days..." Deut 30:15,19,20. This was the same message of life and death Jesus brought: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him," John 3:36.

Despite all the blessings God had bestowed upon Solomon, he "loved many foreign women... from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, 'You shall not associate with them,... for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods'" (1 Kings 11:1,2). And sure enough, "when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been... And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD,... buil(ding) a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab,... and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon" (vs 4,6,7).

God then said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes,... I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen," 1 Kings 11:11-13.

And so then, after Solomon's death, the nation was split in two, with ten tribes breaking away from the tribe of Judah in the south, still ruled by Solomon's descendants, to form the northern kingdom of Israel: "So Israel (went into) rebellion against the house of David... None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David" 1 Kings 12:19,20.

Despite the break-away, God still considered the northern tribes as remaining under the covenant promise, and so sent prophets to them, to call them back to repentance and obedience; prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Hanani, Micaiah, Hosea, Amos, Obadiah and Micah. These said to the kings of Israel, "As the LORD lives, what my God says, that I will speak" (2 Chron 18:13).

## **Rulers of the Northern Kingdom of Israel**

The first ruler of the northern kingdom of Israel was Jeroboam, the son of one of Solomon's servants. He wanted to break all ties with Judah, so he made two golden calves, and "set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan" (1 Kings 12:29), with altars for sacrificing "to the calves" (v 32). And "this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the (calves)" (v 30).

In response to this evil, God decreed: "I am bringing calamity on the house of Jeroboam... The LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam this day and from now on. For the LORD will strike Israel\*... and He will uproot (it) from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the Euphrates River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger," 1 Kings 14:10,14,15.

*\*It must be remembered through this present narrative and as recounted in the Hebrew scriptures from first Kings to Malachi, that "Israel" in many references, by context, refers specifically to the northern kingdom of ten tribes which broke away from the tribe of Judah, ruled from Samaria by a king in most cases not from the tribe of Judah, and that "Judah" refers to the southern kingdom ruled from Jerusalem by a king of the tribe of Judah. It should be noted that at some point in the narrative, "Israel" as a separate break-away political kingdom ceases to exist, having been subjugated and many of the people exiled by the Assyrians, and so after that major event in history, the name "Israel" within the biblical narrative once again refers to the remnant nation made up of all tribes of the sons of Jacob, gathered under the kingdom of Judah and ruled by the king of the line of the sons of David again.*

*Without this understanding, confusion as to the pronouncement of judgment upon "Israel" by God's prophets throughout the prophetic books may arise as to what people group and what political entity and what ruler that particular judgment applies. Discernment as to the distinction between "Israel" as a reference for the northern break-away kingdom and "Israel" as referring to the entire people group of the sons of Jacob collectively under the authorized rule of the king from the line of the sons of David must always be used while reading the books of the Kings, Chronicles, and Prophets in the Hebrew scriptures.*



Jeroboam's son Nadab became king, and "did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and in his sin which he made Israel sin," (1 Kings 15:25,26). Then a conspirator named Baasha of the tribe of Issachar killed Nadab, and "struck down all the household of Jeroboam" (v 29), fulfilling the prophecy of doom God had given. So Baasha set himself up as king over Israel, but "did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin" (v 34).

Because of his sin, God pronounced a similar judgment on him: "Inasmuch as I exalted you... and made you a leader over My people Israel, and you have... made (them) sin,... behold, I will consume Baasha and his house," 1 Kings 16:2,3. When Baasha died, his son Elah became king of Israel, and "his servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him... and struck him and put him to death,... and became king in his place,... (and) killed all the household of Baasha,... according to the word of the LORD" (vs 6,9,10,11,12). But Zimri's reign only lasted seven days, because all the people were appalled by his deceit, and so "made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day" (v 16), and Zimri committed suicide by burning down his own house (v 18).

But Omri also "did evil in the sight of the LORD, and acted more wickedly than all who were before him" (1 Kings 16:25). So then Omri died, and "Ahab his son became king in his place" (v 28), ruling over Israel from Samaria. And Ahab "did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him. And... he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him. So he erected an altar for Baal in the (temple) of Baal, which he built in Samaria... Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel... before him" (vs 30-33).

In response, God raised up the prophet Elijah, and performed miracles, to entice Israel to return to him. But Ahab and Jezebel were very wicked, and so God killed Ahab in a battle with Syria, and Ahab's son Ahaziah became king in his place (1 Kings 22:40). But he, too, "served Baal and worshiped him and provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger according to all that his father had done" (v 53). So Ahaziah "fell through the lattice in his upper chamber... and became very ill" (2 Kings 1:2). God judged him through Elijah, and "Ahaziah died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And because he had no son, Jehoram became king in his place" (v 17).

And Jehoram "did evil in the sight of the LORD" (2 Kings 3:2). Now it was the prophet Elisha's turn to pronounce judgment on the king of Israel. Through one of his prodigies, he anointed Jehu, a captain of the army of Israel and a son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, saying, "I have anointed you king over Israel,... and you shall strike the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel" (2 Kings 9:3-7), for the queen mother Jezebel had "destroyed the prophets of the LORD" (1 Kings 18:4) when she had set up the official Baal worship of her native Sidonian culture.

“So Jehu... conspired against Joram [Jehoram]” 2 Kings 9:14. He shot Jehoram with an arrow from his bow and commanded his officers to throw Jezebel down from her palace window, and her body was trampled by horses and eaten by dogs. “So Jehu killed all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men and his acquaintances and his priests” 2 Kings 10:11. He also slaughtered “all the worshipers of Baal” (vs 19-27) and “eradicated Baal out of Israel” (v 28). But he continued to worship “the golden calves that were at Bethel and... Dan” (v 29).

Unfortunately, “Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the LORD, the God of Israel with all his heart; (for) he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam” (2 Kings 10:31). And so “in (his) days the LORD began to cut off portions from [the territory of the northern kingdom of] Israel” (v 32). After Jehu passed on, Jehoahaz his son became king in his place” (v 35).

But Jehoahaz “did evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam” (2 Kings 13:2). “So the anger of the LORD was kindled against [the northern kingdom of] Israel, and He gave them continually into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of (his son)” (v 3). When Jehoahaz died, “Joash his son became king in his place” (v 9). But he also “did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not turn away from all the sins of Jeroboam... with which he made Israel sin” (v 11). He even went to war with Judah, and he “took all the gold and silver and all the utensils which were found in the house of the LORD... (back) to Samaria” (v 14).

So then Joash “slept with his fathers, and Jeroboam sat on his throne” (2 Kings 13:13). And he “did evil in the sight of the LORD” (2 Kings 14:24), but nevertheless, “the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, which was very bitter, for there was (no)... helper for Israel. And the LORD did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven [at this time], but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash” (vs 26,27).

Then Jeroboam died, and “Zechariah his son became king in his place” (2 Kings 14:29). But he also did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done. So “Shallum... conspired against him and struck him before the people and killed him, and reigned in his place” (2 Kings 15:10). But he only reigned one month before Menahem struck and killed him and “became king in his place” (v 14). “And he did evil in the sight of the LORD” (v 18). In his reign Pul, king of Assyria, “came against the land” (v 19) and so Menahem “exactd (a thousand talents of silver) from Israel... to pay the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria” left with his extortion money. And when Menahem died, “Pekahiah his son became king in his place” (v 22).

But Pekahiah “did evil in the sight of the LORD” (2 Kings 15:24), so “Pekah son of Remaliah, (Pekahiah’s) officer, conspired against him and struck him... and he killed him and became king in his place” (vs 25). But he also did evil in the sight of the LORD, and he even allied with Rezin king of Syria to conduct raids on Judah (v 37). So Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured many cities of Israel, and “he carried them captive to Assyria” (v 29). Then Hoshea “made a conspiracy against Pekah... and struck him and put him to death and became king in his place” (v 30).

## Northern Kingdom of Israel Carried Away

Hoshea also did evil in the sight of the LORD, “only not as the kings of Israel who were before him” (2 Kings 17:2). While the text doesn’t say what he did differently, it was during his reign that “Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant and paid him tribute. But the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, who had sent messengers to So king of Egypt and had offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; so the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison.

“Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes” 2 Kings 17:3-6.

According to the scriptures, this exile came about “because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God... and they had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before (them)... They built... high places (of worship) in all their towns... (and) burned incense on all the high places.

“Yet the LORD warned Israel... through all his prophets and every seer, saying, ‘Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments’... However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God... Then they made their sons and daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him.

“So the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; none was left except the [nation of the] tribe of Judah... And the LORD rejected all the descendants of [the northern kingdom of] Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight... So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria (forever)” 2 Kings 17:7-23 *excerpts*.

The prophet Jeremiah recounted the exile: “Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king (of Judah), ‘Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there... And... for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also,” Jer 3:6-8.

## A Remnant of All Twelve Tribes Found in Kingdom of Judah

While it may appear from reading the text of 2 Kings in isolation that Ten Tribes of Israel were lost<sup>14</sup>, so that only Judah remained, a reading of 2 Chronicles quickly reveals that a number of members of “all the tribes of Israel” attached themselves to the southern kingdom of Judah so that they could remain faithful to “the LORD God of Israel.” Many

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<sup>14</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten\\_Lost\\_Tribes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Lost_Tribes)

did so immediately following the break up of the tribes of Israel into their two divisions, as the tribes of Judah and Benjamin followed Solomon's son Rehoboam, while the northern tribes made Jeroboam their king: "Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem and... held **Judah** and **Benjamin**. Moreover, the priests and **Levites** who were in all Israel stood with him from all their districts. For **the Levites left their pasture lands and their property and came to Judah and Jerusalem**, for Jeroboam and his sons had excluded them from serving as priests to the LORD...

**"And those from all the tribes of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the LORD God of Israel, followed them to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD God of their fathers. And they strengthened the kingdom of Judah** and supported Rehoboam the son of Solomon..." 2 Chron 11:5,12,13-17.

There were also a number of members of the northern tribes who defected to Judah during king Asa's rule as well: "Asa... removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim (and) restored the altar of the LORD which was in front of the porch of the LORD. **And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who resided with them, for many defected to him from Israel** when they saw that the LORD his God was with him," 2 Chron 15:8,9.

A third wave of the faithful from Israel came to join Judah during king Hezekiah's reign, after the Assyrian exile of Israel, in order to celebrate the Passover in the restored temple: "Now Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover to the LORD God of Israel... So they established a decree to circulate a proclamation throughout **all Israel from Beersheba even to Dan**, that they should come to celebrate the Passover to the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem... And the couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the hand of the king and his princes..., saying, 'O sons of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, **that He may return to those of you who escaped and are left from the hand of the kings of Assyria**... For if you return to the LORD, your brothers and your sons will find compassion before those who led them captive, and will return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate, and will not turn His face away from you if you return to Him," 2 Chron 30:1-9.

And so we read that "couriers passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun, but [most] laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. **Nevertheless some men of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem**... (And) many people were gathered at Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread... (But) there were many in the assembly who had not consecrated themselves... For **a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun**, had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed. (Then) Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, 'May the good LORD pardon everyone who prepares his heart to seek God'... So the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people...

**“And all the assembly of Judah rejoiced, with the priests and the Levites, and all the assembly that came from Israel, both the sojourners who came from the land of Israel and those living in Judah,”** 2 Chron 30:10-27 *excerpts*.

Like King Hezekiah before him, following a period of national apostasy, King Josiah of the kingdom of Judah also restored temple worship, purging all the land of “the high places, the Asherim, the carved images, and the molten images, and (tearing) down the altars of the Baals...” (2 Chron 34:3,4). He did this not only in Judah and Jerusalem, but also **“in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon even as far as Naphtali**, in their surrounding ruins... **throughout the land of Israel”** (v 6), which had been invaded and left to the poor and meek by the Assyrians.

Despite the exile of a large portion of the population from the former northern kingdom of Israel, which occurred in the 720s BC, ending the autonomous political rule of its monarchs, there still remained an identifiable remnant of the sons of Israel in the territory of the northern tribes. After Josiah had purged all the land of idols, even as far as Dan in the north, he began to repair the house of the Lord with the money “that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the doorkeepers, had collected **from Manasseh and Ephraim, and from all the remnant of Israel, and from all Judah and Benjamin** and the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (2 Chron 34:9).

## **Israel Becomes One Again**

It was at this time of the reign of Josiah that the scripture narrative begins to refer to all the people as Israel once again: “Then Josiah celebrated the Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem... He also said to the Levites who taught **all Israel** and who were holy to the LORD, ‘Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel built; it will be a burden on your shoulders no longer. Now **serve the LORD your God and His people Israel’**... Thus **the sons of Israel... celebrated the Passover at that time...**” 2 Chron 35:1-3, 17. As 2 Chronicles 35:18 records the event, “And there had not been celebrated a Passover like it **in Israel** since the days of Samuel the prophet; nor had any of the **kings of Israel** celebrated such a Passover as Josiah did with the priests, the Levites, **all Judah and Israel** who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”

Jeremiah declares the restoration of Judah and Israel during Josiah’s reign: “And the LORD said to me, ‘Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah [likely a reference to the apostasy of kings Manasseh and Amon]. Go, and proclaim these words toward the north and say, “Return, faithless Israel,” declares the LORD; I will not look upon you in anger. For I am gracious... And I will take you one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion...”” Jer 3:11-14.

While Jeremiah’s declaration included a prophecy of the coming restoration of Israel under the reign of Messiah, his words were partially fulfilled in the celebration of the Passover under King Josiah.

## Rulers of the Southern Kingdom of Judah

Due to the transgressions Solomon committed in his old age, God had pronounced a judgment on him that his kingdom would be torn in two and the majority given to his servant (1 Kings 11:11-13). The servant turned out to be “Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, Solomon’s servant” (1 Kings 11:26). He was “a valiant warrior” and “industrious”, and so Solomon had put him in charge of the slave labor of the “house of Joseph” (v 28), the northern tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim.

It was the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh who informed Jeroboam of his destiny: “When Jeroboam (was on his way) out of Jerusalem,... the prophet Ahijah... found him on the road... Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, ‘Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes... because they have forsaken Me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon;... and I will take you, and you shall reign over whatever you desire, and you shall be king over Israel,”’” 1 Kings 11:29-33, 37.

At that same time, Ahijah had made it clear to Jeroboam that he would not rule all the tribes: “Nevertheless, I will not take the whole kingdom (away from Solomon), but... to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen for Myself to put My name,” 1 Kings 11:34,36. That son of Solomon was Rehoboam, who took over the throne upon Solomon’s death.

It was the pride and arrogance of Rehoboam himself at his very inauguration that precipitated the rebellion: “Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come (there) to make him king. Now... Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, ‘Your father made our yoke hard; therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you’... But he forsook the counsel of the elders... and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him... And the young men... (advised he should say to the people), ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins! Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions’...

“(So Rehoboam) spoke to (the people) according to the advice of the young men... (and) did not listen to the people; for it was a turn of events from the LORD, that He might establish His word, which the LORD spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam... When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them,... Israel (rebelled) against the house of David,... and made (Jeroboam) king over all Israel. None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David,” 1 Kings 12:1-20 *excerpts*.

Unfortunately, under Rehoboam’s rule, “Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and... provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done... For they also built for themselves high places and sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and beneath

every luxuriant tree. And there were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel” (1 Kings 14:22-24). And so we read, “Shishak the king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, (taking) away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king’s house,... even taking all the shields of gold which Solomon had made” (vs 25, 26). As 2 Chronicles 12:2 states: “And (the invasion) came about... because (Rehoboam and all Israel with him) had been unfaithful to the LORD.”

Because of the pillage of Shishak, “**the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves**,... and when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves” God decided to “grant them some measure of deliverance” and “the anger of the LORD turned away from (King Rehoboam), so as not to destroy him completely” (2 Chron 12:6,7,12). The king was “strengthened” and “conditions (improved) in Judah.” And so when Rehoboam died, he was “**buried in the city of David**” (v 16) **with his father Solomon** (2 Chron 9:31).

After Rehoboam’s death, his son Abijam [aka Abijah] became king over Judah, “and he walked in all the sins of his father... and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, like the heart of his father David” (1 Kings 15:3). Despite his moral shortcoming, during the on-going civil war with Jeroboam of the northern kingdom of Israel, Abijah invoked “the LORD God of Israel” (2 Chron 13:5), accusing Israel of “resist(ing) the kingdom of the LORD” by worshiping the golden calves and driving out the Levitical priests (vs 8, 9), and declaring, “But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and the sons of Aaron are ministering to the LORD as priests, and the Levites attend to their work” (v 10). He declared: “You have forsaken Him, (but) God is with us at our head... O sons of Israel, do not fight against the LORD God” (vs 11, 12).

As a result of Abijah’s declarations, God “gave (Israel) into (his) hand” (2 Chron 13:16), and “the sons of Israel were subdued at that time, and the sons of Judah conquered because they trusted in the LORD, the God of their fathers” (v 18). And so when Abijah died, they **buried him in the city of David with his fathers** (2 Chron 14:1; 1 Kings 15:8).

After Abijah’s death, “Asa his son became king... And Asa did what was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father. He also put away the male cult prostitutes from the land, and removed all the idols which his fathers had made... But the high places were not taken away; nevertheless the heart of Asa was wholly devoted to the LORD all his days” (1 Kings 15:8, 11-14). When “Zerah the Ethiopian came out against (Asa) with an army of a million men and 300 chariots” (v 9), Asa “called to the LORD his God, and said, ‘Lord, there is no one besides Thee to help in the battle between the powerful and (the weak); so help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in Thee, and in Thy name... O LORD, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee” (2 Chron 14:11).

In response to Asa’s plea, “the LORD routed the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled... (and) they were shattered before the LORD, and before His army” (2 Chron 14:12, 13). Following the victory, the prophet Azariah was filled with the Spirit of God, and he encouraged Asa: “Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the LORD is with you when you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him He will forsake you... In (Israel’s) distress they turned to the LORD

God of Israel, and they sought Him, and He let them find Him... (So) be strong and do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work" (2 Chron 15:1-7).

When Asa heard the prophet's words, he "removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim... And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who resided with them... and they sacrificed to the LORD... and... entered into the covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and soul... So the LORD gave them rest on every side... Asa's heart was blameless all his days" (2 Chron 15:8-15). When he died, they "buried him in his own tomb which he had cut out for himself in the city of David" (2 Chron 16:14) and so he was "**buried with his fathers in the city of David**" (1 Kings 15:24).

Then Jehoshaphat Asa's son became king in his place, and "the LORD was with (him) because he followed the example of his father David" (2 Chron 17:3). He even sent officials and Levites to all the cities of Judah to "teach the book of the Law of the LORD" (v 9). But then he "allied himself by marriage with Ahab" the king of Israel (2 Chron 18:1) and, despite the warning of the prophet Micaiah, went up to battle with Ahab against the Syrians. In this battle Ahab was killed by a random arrow shot, and Jehoshaphat had to return to Jerusalem without a victory.

Jehoshaphat did do this, however – he went out "among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers" (2 Chron 19:4). When a great army out of Syria, Moab and Ammon came against Judah, Jehoshaphat prayed to God: "Didst Thou not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and give it to the descendants of Abraham Thy friend forever?... Now behold, the sons of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir... (are) coming to drive us out from Thy possession which Thou hast given us as an inheritance. O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us," 2 Chron 20:6-13.

In response to this prayer by all Judah, "the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel... (who) said, 'Listen... Do not fear or be dismayed,... for the battle is not yours but God's... Stand and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf'" (2 Chron 20:14-17). And so on the day of battle, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the LORD your God, and you will be established" (v 21). God then caused the armies of the three invaders to fight against each other until they had destroyed each other. And so Judah took the spoils, returned to Jerusalem celebrating, and God "gave (Jehoshaphat) rest on all sides" (v 30).

At the end of his life, Jehoshaphat "was **buried with his fathers in the city of David**, and Jehoram his son became king in his place" (2 Chron 21:1). When Jehoram became king, he "killed all his brothers... and some of the rulers of Israel also... And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab did (for Ahab's daughter [Athaliah] was his wife), and he did evil in the sight of the LORD... (making) high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot" (2 Chron 21:4,6,11).



So Elijah the prophet send him a letter, saying, “Because you have... walked in the way of the kings of Israel,... behold, the LORD is going to strike your people, your sons, you wives, and all your possessions with a great calamity” (2 Chron 21:12,13). Then the Philistines and the Arabs invaded Judah and “carried away all the possessions found in the king’s house together with his sons and his wives” (v 17) and God struck Jehoram with an incurable disease, and his “bowels came out because of his sickness and he died in great pain” (v 19). No one regretted his death, and he was buried in the city of David, but “not in the tombs of the kings” (v 20).

Ahaziah, also known as Jehoahaz, the youngest and only remaining son of Jehoram, became king, and he “walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother (Athaliah, daughter of Ahab) was his counselor to do wickedly. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD” (2 Chron 22:1-3). He and his cousin Jehoram the king of Israel were both then assassinated by Jehu the Avenger in the righteous purge, and **Ahaziah was buried in Samaria**, where he had been visiting Jehoram, who had been badly wounded in the war with Syria.

Ahaziah’s mother Athaliah then went on a wicked rampage, killing all the “royal offspring of the house of Judah” except one young son of Ahaziah’s, named Joash, who was saved and hidden away by his sister Jehoshabeath. Athaliah reigned for six years, until Jehoiada the chief priest rallied a rebellion to restore the kingship to David’s descendants, saying, “Behold, the king’s son shall reign, as the LORD has spoken concerning the sons of David” (2 Chron 23:3). So the assembly took Joash and “put the crown on him, and... made him king,... (shouting), ‘Long live the king!’” (v 11). Then they executed Athaliah, tore down the house of Baal, killed its priests, and restored the house of the LORD and the temple worship under the Levitical priests.

Joash (aka Jehoash), king of Judah, under the tutelage of Jehoiada, “did what was right in the sight of the LORD” (2 Chron 24:2) and they restored the temple “according to its specifications, and strengthened it” (v 13) and “offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada” (v 14). But when Jehoiada the high priest died, the leaders of Judah persuaded Joash to abandon the house of the LORD, and to serve “the Asherim and the idols” (v 18). So God “sent prophets to them to bring them back to the LORD;... (but) they would not listen” (v 19), and Joash murdered Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the chief priest.

Because of this evil, God allowed a small army of Syria to destroy “all the officials of the people” (2 Chron 24:23), take a spoil, badly wound Joash, and defeat a much larger army of Judah, as a judgment for having forsaken him. Then Joash’s own servants assassinated him “on his bed” (v 25). They buried him “in the city of David, but **they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings**” (v 25). And Amaziah his son became king, “and **he did right in the sight of the LORD**, yet not with a whole heart” (2 Chron 25:2).

As soon as the kingdom “was firmly in his grasp, (Amaziah) killed his servants who had slain his father the king” (2 Chron 25:3). He then assembled an army and attacked Edom. But after slaughtering them, he “brought the gods of the sons of Seir, set them

up as his gods, bowed down before them, and burned incense to them” (v 14). He then ignored the warnings of a prophet, and challenged Joash, the king of Israel, to a battle.

God gave the victory to Joash king of Israel, because Amaziah and Judah had “sought the gods of Edom” (2 Chron 25:20). Joash “captured Amaziah king of Judah... and brought him down to Jerusalem” (v 23) and plundered the temple and the treasures of the king’s house. He then took hostages back to Samaria, and left Amaziah to rule over a plundered Jerusalem. His subjects then “conspired against him... and he fled to Lachish; but they sent (assassins) after him... and killed him there. Then they brought him (back to Jerusalem) and **buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah**” (2 Chron 25:27, 28).

Uzziah (aka Azariah – 2 Kings 14:21) the son of Amaziah was made king at the age of sixteen, and “**he did right in the sight of the LORD according to all that his father Amaziah had done**. And he continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah ... And as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him” (2 Chron 26:1-5). And so God “helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians..., and the Meunites. The Ammonites also gave tribute to (him)” (2 Chron 26:7,8).

But with the military strength came human pride, and Uzziah “entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense” (2 Chron 26:16). When the priests intervened, Uzziah became enraged with them, so God struck him with leprosy, and he remained a leper “to the day of his death” (v 21), with Jotham his son ruling “over the king’s house judging the people of the land” (v 21). So “Uzziah slept with his fathers, and **they buried him with his fathers in the field of the grave which belonged to the kings**, for they said, ‘He is a leper’” (v 23).

Jotham became king, and “**did right in the sight of the LORD**, according to all that his father Uzziah had done; however he did not enter the temple of the LORD” (2 Chron 27:2). He subjugated the Ammonites and built cities, and so “Jotham became mighty because he ordered his ways before the LORD his God” (v 6). Because of this, he “slept with his fathers, and **he was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father**” (2 Kings 15:38). And “Ahaz his son became king in his place” (2 Chron 27:9).

Ahaz “**did not do right in the sight of the LORD** as David his father had done. But he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel; he also made molten images for the Baals. Moreover, he burned incense in the valley of Ben-hinnom, and burned his sons in fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel” (2 Chron 28:1-3). Because of this, God “delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they defeated him and carried away from him a great number of captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who inflicted him with heavy casualties” (v 5).

It got worse: King Ahaz begged the kings of Assyria for help, because the Edomites and Philistines had attacked Judah (2 Chron 28:16-18). But instead of helping him, King Tilgath-pilneser came and “afflicted him” (v 20), so that Ahaz tried to appease him with treasures, but it didn’t help. Then King Ahaz “became yet more unfaithful to the LORD. For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus... and closed the doors of the house of the

LORD, and made altars for himself in every corner of Jerusalem” (vs 22,23,24). So when Ahaz died, “they buried him in the city, in Jerusalem, for **they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel**; and Hezekiah his son reigned in his place” (v 27). It was during the reign of Ahaz over Judah that the capture and exile of the northern kingdom of Israel by Assyrian kings Shalmaneser V, Sargon II and Sennacherib occurred, with Samaria falling in 722 BC<sup>15</sup>.

Hezekiah, who reigned from about 715 until around 687 BC, “did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done... open(ing) the doors of the house of the LORD and repair(ing) them. And he brought in the priests and the Levites... (in order to) consecrate the house of the LORD” (2 Chron 29:2-5). It was a period of great reformation for Judah, as Hezekiah confessed the sins of the nation: “Our fathers have been unfaithful and have done evil in the sight of the LORD our God, and have forsaken Him and turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the LORD... Therefore the wrath of the LORD was against Judah and Jerusalem, and He has made them an object of terror... For... our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and daughters and our wives are in captivity for this” (vs 6-9).

Hezekiah then vowed to restore the temple worship: “Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that His burning anger may turn away from us. My sons, do not be negligent now, for the LORD has chosen you to stand before Him, to minister to Him, and to be His ministers and burn incense,” 2 Chron 29:10, 11. He directed the priests to prepare and consecrate the temple and its “utensils”, and after that, the “whole assembly” performed a massive sacrifice. It was following this dedication that Hezekiah “sent to all Israel and Judah... that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover” (2 Chron 30:1).

This huge event marked the restoration of Israel and Judah as one people once again: “And all the assembly of Judah rejoiced, with the priests and the Levites, and all the assembly that came from Israel, both the sojourners who came from the land of Israel and those living in Judah... There was nothing like this in Jerusalem since the days of Solomon” (2 Chron 30:25, 26). And the people brought gifts and tithes that overflowed the coffers, for “the LORD (had) blessed His people” (2 Chron 31:10).

Then Sennacherib king of Assyria thought he would do to the kingdom of Judah what he and his fathers had done to Israel, “intending to make war on Jerusalem” (2 Chron 32:2). Hezekiah reassured the people: “Be strong and courageous, do not fear... the king of Assyria... for the one with us is greater than the one with him,” 2 Chron 32:7. Then God “sent an angel who destroyed every mighty warrior, commander and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned in shame to his own land, and... some of his own children killed him” (v 21).

God blessed Hezekiah with “immense riches and honor... and (he) prospered in all that he did” (2 Chron 32:27,30). So when he died, “**they buried him in the upper section of the tombs of the sons of David**; and all Judah... honored him at his death” (v 33).

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<sup>15</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish\\_diaspora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_diaspora)

Hezekiah's son Manasseh became king, and he "did evil in the sight of the LORD according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel" (2 Chron 33:2). He restored Baal worship, and "practiced witchcraft, used divination,... practiced sorcery, and dealt with mediums and spiritists" (v 6). He even put a carved image of an idol "in the house of God" (v 7). Because of this great evil, the Assyrian army came against Jerusalem, and captured Manasseh, putting a hook through his nose as a humiliating display of his subjection<sup>16</sup>, and took him to Babylon (v 11).

Manasseh cried to God in his distress, and God answered him, even restoring him back to his kingdom in Jerusalem (2 Chron 33:12,13). After that, Manasseh "removed the foreign gods and the idol(s)... (and) altars" (v 15), and "ordered Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel" (v 16). Despite this later repentance, the damage he had done to Judah was unforgivable, having "shed very much innocent blood" (2 Kings 21:16), and so when he died, the people "**buried him in his own house**" (v 20), and not in the tombs of the kings.

Manasseh's son Amon became king, and "did evil in the sight of the LORD... sacrific(ing) to all the carved images which his father Manasseh had made, and he served them. Moreover, he did not humble himself before the LORD as his father... had done, but... multiplied his guilt" (2 Chron 33). Finally his servants conspired against him and put him to death in his own house, and "**he was buried in his grave in the garden of Uzza**" (2 Kings 21:26), and not in the tombs of the kings. And Josiah his son became king.

Josiah "did right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his father David and did not turn aside to the right or to the left.... While he was still a youth, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year (of his reign) he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, the carved images, and the molten images. And they tore down the altars of the Baals... and ... chopped down (the altars)... purg(ing) Judah and Jerusalem, and in the cities of Manassah, Ephraim, Simeon even as far as Naphtali, in their surrounding ruins... throughout **all the land of Israel**" (2 Chron 34:1-7).

He then set about to "repair the house of the LORD his God" (2 Chron 34:8). And as they worked, Hilkiah the high priest "found the book of the law of the LORD given by Moses" (v 14). One of the scribes read the book to King Josiah, and "when the king heard the words of the law,... he tore his clothes" (v 19), and commanded Hilkiah to "inquire of the LORD... concerning the words of the book which has been found..." (v 21). Hilkiah found Huldah the prophetess, who was living in Jerusalem, and she prophesied: "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I am bringing evil on this place and on its inhabitants, even all the curses written in the book which they have read in the presence of the king of Judah, because they have forsaken me and have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger..., therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place, and it shall not be quenched.'

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<sup>16</sup> [https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2\\_chronicles/33-11.htm](https://biblehub.com/commentaries/2_chronicles/33-11.htm)

“But to the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus you will say to him, ‘... Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God, when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and because you humbled yourself before Me, tore your clothes, and wept before Me, I truly have heard you,’ declares the LORD. ‘Behold, **I will gather you to your fathers** and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, so your eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring on this place and on its inhabitants,’” 2 Chron 34:23-28.

They then told King Josiah all she had said, and he read to all the people “the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD,” (2 Chron 34:30). He then “made a covenant before the LORD to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant written in the book” (v 31). And Josiah “removed all the abominations from all the lands belonging to the sons of Israel... Throughout his lifetime they did not turn from following the LORD God of their fathers” (v 33). And they once again “celebrated the Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem... and he... encouraged (the priests) in the service of the house of the LORD” (2 Chron 35:1,2).

As the account describes, “there had not been celebrated a Passover like it in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet; nor had any of the kings of Israel celebrated such a Passover as Josiah did with the priests, the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (2 Chron 35:18).

Unfortunately, Josiah used bad judgment later on. When King Neco of Egypt came up through the land to make war with Assyria, Josiah went out with his army to engage him. Neco sent word to him: “What have we to do with each other, O King of Judah? I am not coming against you today but against the house with which I am at war, and God has ordered me to hurry. Stop for your own sake from interfering with God who is with me, that He may not destroy you,” 2 Chron 35:21. But Josiah would not listen, but came out in disguise in the plain of Meggido, and there he was shot by an arrow, and he died. His servants carried him back to Jerusalem, where he was “**buried in the tombs of his fathers**. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for (him)” (v 24).

Despite all the good Josiah did in his lifetime, “the LORD (was not going to) turn from the fierceness of His great wrath with which His anger burned against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. And the LORD said, ‘I will remove Judah also from My sight, as I have removed Israel. And I will cast off Jerusalem, this city which I have chosen, and the temple which I said, ‘My name shall be there,’” (2 Kings 23:26-27).

After Josiah’s death, “the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah and anointed him and made him king in place of his father” (2 Kings 23:30). But Jehoahaz “did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done. And Pharaoh Neco imprisoned him at Riblah in the land of Hamath... And Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim [3079 - *Jehovah will raise*]. But he took Jehoahaz [3059 - *Jehovah seized*] away and brought him to Egypt, and **he died there**” (vs 32-34).

Jehoiakim “did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done” (2 Kings 23:37), so that “in his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years, (after which) he turned and rebelled against him. And the LORD sent against him bands of Chaldeans, bands of Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of Ammonites. So He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which He had spoken through His servants the prophets” (2 Kings 24:1,2).

Finally, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon “came up against (Jehoiakim) and bound him with bronze chains to take him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also brought some of the articles of the house of the LORD to Babylon and put them in his temple at Babylon” (2 Chron 36:6,7). “So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers” (2 Kings 24:6), that is, **he died a captive in Babylon**, “and Jehoiachin [3078 – *Jehovah will establish*] his son became king in his place... and he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done” (v 9).

It was at that time “the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon went up to Jerusalem, and the city came under siege, and Nebuchadnezzar (himself) came to the city, while his servants were besieging it. And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he and his mother and his servants and his captains and his officials. So the king of Babylon took him captive in the eighth year [597 BC] of his reign” (2 Kings 24:10-12).

“Now it came about in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah,... that Evil-merodach king of Babylon,... released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison... And Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes, and had his meals in the king’s presence regularly all the days of his life” (2 Kings 25:27-30). And so **he died there in exile in Babylon**.

At the same time Nebuchadnezzar had taken Jehoiachin captive, he also “carried out from (Jerusalem) all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king’s house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, just as the LORD had said (would happen). Then he led away into exile all Jerusalem and all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land... Then the king of Babylon made (Jehoiachin’s) uncle Mattaniah, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah [6667 – *the right of Jah*]” (2 Kings 24:13,14,17).

But Zedekiah “did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. For (due to) the anger of the LORD this came about in Jerusalem and Judah until He cast them out of His presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon” (2 Kings 24:19,20). This is when Nebuchadnezzar came, with his entire army, against Jerusalem, “camped against it, and built a siege wall all around it” (2 Kings 25:1).

For two years, “the city was under siege” (v 2), until “the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people” (v 3), and the king and all the people tried to

sneak out and flee, but “the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho and all his army was scattered from him. Then they captured the king and brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and he passed sentence on him. And they slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, they put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him with bronze fetters and brought him to Babylon” (vs 5-7), and “put him in prison until the day of his death” (Jer 52:11).

2 Chronicles describes the evil committed by Zedekiah, and the result of the nation’s unfaithfulness: “He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet who spoke for the LORD. And he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar who had made him swear allegiance by God. But he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel. Furthermore, all the officials of the priests and the people were very unfaithful following all the abominations of the nations; and they defiled the house of the LORD which He had sanctified in Jerusalem.

“And the LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy. Therefore He brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or infirm; He gave them all into his hand.

“And all the articles of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his officers, he brought them all to Babylon. Then they burned the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its fortified buildings with fire, and destroyed all its valuable articles. And those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths” 2 Chron 36:12-21. The book of Jeremiah was written by this prophet, the son of Hilkiah the priest, during the reign of Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah, “until the exile of Jerusalem” (Jer 1:3). “So Judah was led away into exile from its land” 2 Kings 25:21.

“But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen” v 12. And Nebuchadnezzar “appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan over them” (v 22). But Ishmael of the royal family killed Gedaliah and those of his administration, and so “all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the (escaped) forces arose and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans”, having just assassinated Nebuchadnezzar’s appointed governor. The land was now left with a very small number of the children of Israel.

Jeremiah the prophet was rescued by the captain of the bodyguard of the king of Babylon, who said to him: “The LORD your God promised this calamity against this place; and the LORD has brought it on and done just as He promised. Because your people sinned against the LORD and did not listen to His voice, therefore this thing happened to you. But now, behold, I am freeing you today,” Jer 40:2-4.

## The Exile to Babylon Prophesied

Just as Elijah and Elisha were sent by God to warn the Northern Kingdom of Israel to repent or face a judgment of destruction and exile, so Ezekiel and Jeremiah were commissioned by God to warn the Southern Kingdom of Judah that if they did not repent and return to God, they too would be destroyed and exiled. Ezekiel had been carried away to Babylon along with King Jehoiachin and 10,000 others<sup>17</sup> out of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in the first siege, while Jeremiah remained in Jerusalem through the reign of Zedekiah, who was captured in the final siege and ultimate destruction of the city, and exiled with the rest of its population.

God told Ezekiel, who was living beside the river Chebar at Telabib in Chaldea (Ezek 3:15), “Go to the exiles, to the sons of your people, and speak to them and tell them, whether they listen or not,” (Ezek 3:11). These were the words of God he was to speak: “I have set (Jerusalem) at the center of the nations, with lands around her. But she has rebelled against My ordinances more wickedly than the nations and against My statutes more than the lands which surround her... therefore, ... I am against you, and I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations... Because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols and with all your abominations, therefore I will also withdraw, and My eye shall have no pity and I will not spare,” Ezek 5:5,6,8,11.

While Ezekiel declares judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem, he also assures that God would preserve a remnant out of her: “I (will) send My four severe judgments against Jerusalem: sword, famine, wild beasts, and plague to cut off man and beast from it! **Yet, behold, survivors will be left in it who will be brought out, both sons and daughters. Behold, they are going to come forth to you** and you will see their conduct and actions; then you will be comforted (in spite of) the calamity which I have brought against Jerusalem,” Ezek 14:21-22.

## Always a Promise of Restoration

Just as God had spoken through Moses the promise of the Covenant – “If you will not obey the LORD your God... you shall be torn from the land... When... you return to the LORD... **then (He) will restore you...** and have compassion on you” (Deut 28:15,63; 30:1-3) – so God spoke the promise of the Covenant to Judah through Ezekiel: “You (will bear) the penalty of your lewdness and abominations... (for) I will... do with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath by breaking the Covenant. **Nevertheless, I will remember My Covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting Covenant with you.** Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed... when I have forgiven you for all that you have done,” Ezek 16:58-63.

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<sup>17</sup> Ezekiel, Biblica The International Bible Society <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-ezekiel/>



The restoration declared by Moses is manifest by a return to the land: “So it shall become when all these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all the nations where the LORD your God has banished you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, **and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back.** And the LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it” (Deut 30:1-5).

So likewise the promise of restoration spoken of by Ezekiel is manifest by a return to the land: “Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, (to) your brothers, your relatives, your fellow exiles, and the whole house of Israel... say, “Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Though I had removed them far away among the nations, and though I had scattered them among the countries,... **I shall gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I shall give you the land of Israel,**”’” Ezek 11:14-17.

## **A Timeline is Given**

Abraham had been given a prophecy by God of the time his descendants would be exiled in a land “that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed **four hundred years**” (Gen 15:13). That land turned out to be Egypt, according to the story. But God makes clear in Abram’s vision that “afterward they will come out with many possessions” (v 14) to reclaim the land they had been given by Covenant: “On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates” (v 18). The timetable for that return is declared there in the prophecy: “**Then in the fourth generation they shall return here**” (v 16).

In the same way the exile into Egypt was delineated by a prophetic timeline, so the exile into Babylon was going to last for a specific length of time, as declared by God through Jeremiah: “Now these are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon [in the second exile at the time King Jeconiah had been captured]... ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, “Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens, and eat their produce. Take wives and become fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease... For thus says the LORD, ‘**When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.** For I know the plans that I have for you... Plans for welfare and not

for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart... **I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you... And I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile,**””” Jer 1-14.

What does it mean by “when seventy years have been completed for Babylon”? It is an historic fact the Babylonian Empire ended in 539 BC<sup>18</sup>, when the Persian Cyrus the Great conquered the city of Babylon and deposed Nabonidus and killed his son Belshazzar (Dan 5:30). Babylon as a ruling empire therefore ended in that year. 70 years in the past from that date would be 609 BC, and that was the year the Babylonians and Medes defeated an Assyrian-Egyptian alliance at the Fall of Harran, putting an end to Assyria as an independent state<sup>19</sup> and establishing the Babylonians as the dominant force to be reckoned with in the entire region, including that of Judea and Samaria. Daniel recognized the demise of the Babylonian reign meant “the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years,” (Dan 9:2) had arrived.

Daniel was one of the “sons of Israel... of the royal family and of the nobles” (Dan 1:3) who had been carried off to Babylon during the first exile, which ended the reign of King Jehoiakim. Nebuchadnezzar ordered that certain Jewish youths who demonstrated exceptional traits, among them Daniel, be trained and educated, including in “the literature and language of the Chaldeans” (v 4), so as to “enter the king’s personal service” (v 5). Due to Daniel’s interpreting the king’s dreams, and that “as for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted (him), he found (him) ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm” (Dan 1:20), Daniel was promoted to ruler over the whole province of Babylon and “chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon” (Dan 2:48). Daniel continued to serve the court through the reign of Nebuchadnezzar’s successor Nabonidus and his son Belshazzar, and then under the conquering Persian King Cyrus the Great, with Darius the Mede (aka Gubaru<sup>20</sup>) ruling over the “kingdom of the Chaldeans” (Dan 9:1) as a regional king under Cyrus, who ruled the entire Medo-Persian-Neo-Babylonian Empire from his capital city Pasargadae<sup>21</sup> in Persia.

As the book of Daniel states, “In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was **made** king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans” (Dan 9:1), presumably by Cyrus, and just after the overthrow of Babylonian king Belshazzar (Dan 55:30,31), Daniel “observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years” (Dan 9:2). In other words, Daniel realized seventy years “(had now) been completed for Babylon”.

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<sup>18</sup> Neo-Babylonian Empire, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Babylonian\\_Empire#cite\\_note-2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Babylonian_Empire#cite_note-2)

<sup>19</sup> Neo-Assyrian Empire, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Assyrian\\_Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Assyrian_Empire)

<sup>20</sup> Darius the Mede, Bible Gateway <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Darius-Mede>

<sup>21</sup> Cyrus The Great, Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrus\\_the\\_Great](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrus_the_Great)

There in the palace of the kings of Babylon, Daniel had been reading the words of the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah, written in the days of King Josiah, even before Daniel's own exile, warning of the coming destruction of Jerusalem from God at the hands of the Babylonians: "Behold, I am bringing a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel... Their quiver is like an open grave, all of them are mighty men. And they will devour your sons and your daughters; they will devour your flocks and your herds; they will devour your vines and your fig trees; they will demolish with the sword your fortified cities in which you trust.

"Yet even in those days... I will not make you a complete destruction. And it shall come about when they say, 'Why has the LORD our God done all these things to us?' then you shall say to them, 'As you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve strangers in a land that is not yours,'" Jer 5:15-18.

Daniel then read about the promise of the restoration in Jeremiah's writings: "Behold I am about to uproot... the house of Judah... And it will come about that after I have uprooted them, I will again have compassion on them; **and I will bring them back**, each one to his inheritance and each one to his land," Jer 12:14,15. While the Prophet had decreed, "All Judah has been carried into exile, wholly into exile" (Jer 13:19) -- emphatically declaring the words of the LORD, "Even though Moses and Samuel were to stand before Me, My heart would not be with this people; send them away from My presence and let them go!" (Jer 15:1) -- Daniel read on about their return, a promise from God: "I will hurl you out of this land into the land which you have not known... (Yet) behold, days are coming... when it will no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' but, 'As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them.' **For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers**," Jer 16:13-15.

The promise of God's restoration included a vision of a future time when He would raise up a righteous descendant of David: "Woe to the shepherds [i.e., false prophets and unrighteous priests] who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!... You have scattered My flock and driven them away...; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds... Then I Myself shall gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and shall bring them back to their pasture; and they will be fruitful and multiply. I shall also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing...

**"Behold, the days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, "The LORD our righteousness,"'" Jer 23:1-6.**

This righteous Branch of David is, according to Paul, Jesus Christ: "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:... God... raised up David to be (Israel's) king... (And) from the

offspring of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus (Christ)... God has (thus) fulfilled (the) promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'Thou art My Son; today I have begotten Thee,'" Acts 13:22,23,33. And Jesus is the "Righteous One" prophesied to come, as the martyr Stephen declared to the Sanhedrin: "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become," Acts 7:52.

As Daniel continued to read the prophecies of Jeremiah, he found the words written in "the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon [i.e., 605 BC]), which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying,... "Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north... and I will (call) to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, and against its inhabitants, and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them... And this whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and **these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.** Then it will be **when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation...** for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans..." Jer 25:1,2,9,11,12.

Jeremiah repeated the promise of the timing: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,... 'I have made the earth, the men and the beasts which are on the face of the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it to the one who is pleasing in My sight. And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant,... And **all the nations shall serve him, and his son, and his grandson, until the time of [the end of] his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will make [his land] their servant,**" Jer 27:4-7.

It was in the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, put in charge of the Babylonian province by Cyrus the Great upon the Persian conquest of Babylon, that Daniel "observed in the books the number of years which was revealed... to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely seventy years" (Dan 9:2), and at that moment he realized that "the time of (Nebuchadnezzar's) land" had come, and the "great king" who "will make him their servant" was Cyrus the Great, king of Persia.

Now the words of Isaiah the prophet, who wrote in the days of the "reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (Is 1:1), became clear: "Thus says the LORD who made you... O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me. I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud, and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you... It is I who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited!' And of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built.' And I will raise up her ruins again... It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built.' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'" Is:44:2,21,22,26-28.

At the time Isaiah wrote these words, Cyrus the Great would not even be born for another hundred years, and Persia was still just a “collection of semi-nomadic tribes who raised sheep, goats and cattle on the Iranian plateau.”<sup>22</sup> But now, as Daniel read from Jeremiah, no doubt the words of Isaiah flashed in his mind: “Thus says the LORD to **Cyrus His anointed**, whom I have taken by the right hand, **to subdue nations before him**, and to loose the loins of kings; to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut; ‘I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze, and cut through their iron bars. And I will give you the treasures of darkness, and hidden wealth of secret places, in order that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name,’” Is 45:1-3.

Daniel was living in the palace courts of Babylon when Nabonidus’ son by Nitocris, daughter of Nebuchadnezzar<sup>23</sup>, Belshazzar, the ruler of Babylon while Nabonidus was away in Arabia<sup>24</sup>, held his infamous “feast for a thousand of his nobles” (Dan 5:1) and desecrated the holy vessels of the “temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem” (v3) that his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had taken in conquest. This was the night the handwriting on the wall appeared, condemning Belshazzar to the loss of his kingdom, as Daniel interpreted, “your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and the Persians” (v28).

That very night Cyrus’ army, under command of his general Ugbaru<sup>25</sup>, entered the city of Babylon by the riverbed of the Euphrates, having diverted the river into the lake north of the city<sup>26</sup>, and entered the gates to the palace virtually unopposed, and “that same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain” (Dan 5:30).

When Cyrus assumed rule in Babylon, one of his first acts was to free the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple: “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia – in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah – the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, ‘Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, “The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!”’” 2 Chronicles 36:22,23.

Not only was the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus prophesied by Isaiah, but Isaiah also prophesied Cyrus’ proclamation to free the Jewish exiles and rebuild Jerusalem: “‘For the sake of Jacob My servant, and Israel My chosen one, I have also called you (Cyrus) by name; I have given you a title of honor though you have not known Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God. I have gird you, though you have not

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<sup>22</sup> Persian Empire, History.com <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-middle-east/persian-empire>

<sup>23</sup> Nitocris, Brooklyn Museum [https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/dinner\\_party/heritage\\_floor/nitocris](https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/dinner_party/heritage_floor/nitocris)

<sup>24</sup> Nabonidus, New World Encyclopedia <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Nabonidus>

<sup>25</sup> Fall of Babylon, Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall\\_of\\_Babylon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_Babylon)

<sup>26</sup> The History of Herodotus <http://classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.mb.txt>

known Me; **that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me.** I am the LORD, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these'... I have aroused him in righteousness, and I will make all his ways smooth; **he will build My city, and will let Me exiles go free, without any payment or reward,"** Is 45:4-7,13. God was going to **perform his work of bringing his people out of Babylon,** just as he did in bringing them out of Egypt, **"in order to show... (His) power, and in order to proclaim (His) name through all the earth"** (Ex 9:16).

Daniel recognized the seventy years were up, and the return of the exiles would soon begin. His first response was to pray a prayer of confession and repentance for his people: "So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. And I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, 'Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and loving kindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled, even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances... Righteousness belongs to Thee, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day – to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all Israel, those who are near by and those who are far away in all the countries to which Thou hast driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against Thee... As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us,'" Dan 9:3-7,13.

Following his prayer of confession, Daniel then pleads with God for compassion and forgiveness: "And now, O Lord our God, **who hast brought Thy people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand** and hast made a name for Thyself, as it is this day – we have sinned, we have been wicked. O Lord, **in accordance with all Thy righteous (works),** let now Thine anger and Thy wrath turn away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people have become a reproach to all those around us. So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplications, and for Thy sake, O Lord, let Thy face shine on Thy desolate sanctuary. O my God, incline Thine ear and hear! Open Thine eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Thy name; for we are not presenting our supplications before Thee on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Thy great compassion. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Thine own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name,'" Dan 9:15-19.

God then answered Daniel's prayer, as Daniel relates: "Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, while I was still speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel... came to me... and said, 'O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight:... At the beginning of your supplications **the command was issued,** and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed,'" Dan 9:20-23.

What “command” had been “issued”, in answer to the prayer Daniel had been praying? It was the **command of Cyrus**, as recorded by Ezra, the Jewish scribe and priest, the very command that had been prophesied by Jeremiah: “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, **the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus** king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, ‘Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, “The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. And every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem,’”” Ezra 1:1-4.

Ezra wrote an historical account of the initial return of the Jews from out of Babylon to the land of Judah: “Then the heads of the fathers’ households of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites arose, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. And all those about them encouraged them with articles of silver, with gold, with goods, with cattle, and with valuables, aside from all that was given as a freewill offering,” Ez 1:5,6.

By this outpouring of material support, one is reminded of the flight of the children of Israel from out of Egypt, as to how God provided for them from out of the wealth of the Egyptians: “The LORD said to Moses,... ‘Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold... Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing... Thus they plundered the Egyptians,” Ex 11:1,2; 12:35,36.

Cyrus also contributed to the return: “Also King Cyrus brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and put in the house of his gods... All the articles of gold and silver numbered 5,400. Sheshbazzar (the prince of Judah) brought them all up with the exiles who went up from Babylon to Jerusalem,” Ez 1:7,11.

Ezra recorded the numbers of the initial returning Jews: “Now these are the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his city. These came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah,” Ez 2:1,2. Ezra then records the numbers of each family by family name, and some by the city they were originally from, and also the priests, Levites, the sons of Solomon’s servants, and those who were “not able to give evidence of their fathers’ households, and their descendants, whether they were of Israel,” (Ez 2: 59). As Ezra records: “The whole assembly numbered 42,360, besides their male and female servants, who numbered 7,337,” Ez 2:64,65.

Daniel had been part of the first exile, when Nebuchadnezzar came up against King Jehoiakim in 605 BC and “bound him with bronze chains (and took) him to Babylon” (2 Chron 36:6). At that time Nebuchadnezzar “ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the (young) nobles” (Dan 1:3). An exact number is not given, so “some” will have to do.

The second exile was much more extensive, as Nebuchadnezzar came against Jehoiakim’s son Jehoiachin, laying siege to Jerusalem, and finally taking King Jehoiachin captive in “the eighth year of (Nebuchadnezzar’s) reign” (2 Kings 24:12), that is, in 597 BC. In that second exile Nebuchadnezzar “led away... ten thousand captives” according to 2 Kings 24:14-16. Jeremiah 52:28-30 indicates there were “3,023 Jews” taken “in the seventh year” of Nebuchadnezzar’s rule, which likely refers to the year the siege began, with the end of the siege and the captivity happening in his eighth year. The number of 3,023 “Jews” was likely a reference to those who would be considered prominent, or the elite, such as members of the royal family, nobles, or officials, since the total number taken was 10,000: 7,000 “men of valor” (2 Kings 24:16), which included 1,000 “craftsmen and the smiths”, and the remaining count of 3,000 or so being the “king’s mother and the king’s wives and his officials and the leading men of the land” (v 15).

A third exile took place at the end of the two year long siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar against King Zedekiah, when the Chaldeans finally destroyed the city and burned down the temple. The siege began in the “ninth year” of Zedekiah’s reign (Jer 52:4), and lasted two years, until “the eleventh year” of his reign (v 5). This would be the year 587 BC, the “eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar”, when he carried away “832 persons from Jerusalem” (Jer 52:29); “those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon” (2 Chron 36:20). Likely this number also referred only to the *elite* Jews of the city, as 2 Kings 25:11 says, “then the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon and the rest of the **multitude**, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away into exile”, leaving “some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen” (v 12). 832 prominent Jews of the city, and a “multitude” of “the rest of the people” and “deserters.”

Finally, “in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar [i.e., 582 BC], Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile 745 Jewish people” (Jer 52:30), again, by context, numbering just the elite of a larger group. Josephus records that Nebuchadnezzar attacked Moab and Ammon in that year (Jos. Antiquities 10:9), and also Egypt, after Jeremiah the prophet had warned Johanan not to lead the remaining Jews of Judah into that land, a warning he did not heed (Jeremiah chapters 41-44).

This was after Ishmael had murdered Governor Gedaliah “whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land” (Jer 41:18), and Johanan and “all the commanders of the forces” (v 16) had rescued “the remnant of the people who were in Mizpah” that Ishmael had captured and taken to Ammon (vs 11-18). He then led them to Egypt.



Josephus records (Antiquities of the Jews, Book X, Chapter IX) this final exile of the Jews this way:

[B]oth the people, and Johanan disobeyed the counsel of God, which he gave them by the Prophet, and removed into Egypt; and carried Jeremiah and Baruch along with him.

7. And when they were there, God signified to the Prophet, that the King of Babylon was about making an expedition against the Egyptians; and commanded him to foretell to the people, that Egypt should be taken, and the King of Babylon should slay some of them, and should take others captive, and bring them to Babylon: which things came to pass accordingly. For on the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, which was the twenty third of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, he made an expedition against Cele Syria; and when he had possessed himself of it, he made war against the Ammonites, and Moabites: and when he had brought all those nations under subjection, he fell upon Egypt, in order to overthrow it. And he slew the King that then reigned, and set up another: and he took those Jews that were there captives, and led them away to Babylon.

In summary, Nebuchadnezzar exiled the Jews to Babylon over four historic events: 1) During the first siege of Jerusalem in 605 BC when he took King Jehoiakim and Daniel captive, and "some" others, 2) When he attacked Jerusalem a second time in 597 BC and took King Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) and the prophet Ezekiel captive, along with 10,000 others, 3) When he laid siege to Jerusalem for two years from 589-587 BC, finally destroying the city and the temple, and blinding King Zedekiah and taking him captive along with 832 prominent Jews, and finally 4) In 582 BC, when he attacked Ammon, Moab and Egypt, and took 745 prominent Jews captive from Egypt to Babylon.

### **Three Decrees and Three Waves of Return (*Aliyah*)**

As the narrative of the return of the Jews to Israel is read through the various respective scriptures, it is discovered there were three separate waves of return over a course of about 90 years. Additionally, there were three different kings of Persia who each issued a decree for the Jews to return and rebuild. Cyrus' decree to return and build the temple, as recorded by 2 Chronicles 36:22,23, Ezra 1:1-4, and referenced by Daniel 9:23, was the first of these three decrees relative to the return of the Jews to Judah and to rebuilding, either of the temple itself or the city of Jerusalem in which it was located. In response to Cyrus' decree, "Whoever there is among you of all His people... let him go up to Jerusalem... and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel" (Ez 1:3), Zerubbabel, along with Sheshbazzar, perhaps an uncle of his<sup>27</sup>, led the first wave of returnees "to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own city" (Ez 2:1) about 538 BC.

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<sup>27</sup> [T]he same title of governor ("pe<sup>h</sup>ah") of Judah is given [Zerubbabel] by the prophet Haggai (i. 1; ii. 2, 21) as is attributed to **Sheshbazzar** by Ezra (v. 14); while it is supposed that he, like Daniel, bore a double name, the Hebrew "Zerubbabel" and the Babylonian "Sheshbazzar." In opposition to this view it is pointed out that "Zerubbabel" is in all probability a Babylonian name, and that no hint of this identity is given in those portions of Ezra in which both names occur. **It has been suggested that "Sheshbazzar" may be identical with "Shenazar" (1 Chron. iii. 18), one of the sons of Jehoiachin and an uncle of Zerubbabel.** <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/15251-zerubbabel>

The returnees were intent on restoring covenant worship, and immediately built an altar, consecrated the priests, celebrated the Feast of Booths, and began the work of laying the foundation for the reconstruction of the Temple. When the foundation was complete, “all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid” (Ez 3:11).

As the Jews in Jerusalem began work on building the temple, the “people of the land”, those who had been brought in by the Assyrians generations before, “discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their counsel all the (rest of the) days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius (I, the Great)” (Ez 4:4,5). As Ezra 4:24 relates: “Then work on the house of God in Jerusalem ceased, and it was stopped until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.” That would be the year 520 BC, 18 years after Zerubbabel led the first wave of exiles and 19 years after Cyrus issued the decree to return and rebuild the temple. The temple, meanwhile, languished, unfinished, for well over a decade.

It was at this time that “the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel..., governor of Judah, and to Joshua... the high priest, saying..., ‘Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?... Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified’” (Haggai 1:1,4,7,8). So Zerubbabel and Joshua “arose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem” (Ez 5:2).

More trouble boiled up, though, as Tattenai, the governor of the whole Persian province west of the Euphrates, came to them and demanded, “Who issued you a decree to rebuild this temple and to finish this structure?” (Ez 5:3). The Jews then told them about the decree Cyrus had issued back in his first year, and that they were authorized under that edict. Tattenai then sent a letter to King Darius, asking that “a search be conducted in the king’s treasure house, which is there in Babylon, (to see) if it be that a decree was issued by King Cyrus to rebuild this house of God at Jerusalem” (Ez 5:17).

After receiving the request, Darius ordered a full search, and the scroll containing Cyrus’ decree was discovered in Ecbatana in the province of Media. So Darius wrote his own decree back to Tattenai, instructing that no one interfere with the constructing of the temple, and further, that “the full cost is to be paid to these people from the royal treasury out of the taxes of the provinces beyond the River, and that without delay” (Ez 6:8). “And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus (and) Darius...” (v 14).

Zechariah, in that second year of Darius the Great, declared the words of the LORD, which included a message to those exiles still residing in exile across the River: “Return to Me... that I may return to you... I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house shall be built in it... My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem... Ho there! Flee from the land of the north... For I (had) dispersed you as the four winds of the heavens... Ho, Zion! Escape, you who are (still) living with the daughter of Babylon...” Ez 1:3,16,17; 2:6,7.

## Affliction Prompts Return

Despite Zechariah's call for the remaining Jews in Babylon to return to the land of Judah, there is no record of a return of exiles at that time. Instead, according to Esther 3:6, Jews of the *diaspora* – the dispersion – were living “throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus (aka Xerxes I)” – the successor to King Darius – who “reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces... (from) Susa the capital” (Esther 1:1,2). It was at this time that a great affliction came upon them in the form of Haman's Plot.

The Book of Esther recounts how King Ahasuerus, recognized in secular history as Xerxes I, or Xerxes the Great, best known for his failed invasion of Greece in 480 BC<sup>28</sup>, banned Queen Vashti from the court for an act of insolence, and set about to choose a new “queen in place of Vashti” (Esther 2:4). The Jewess Esther, a “young lady (who) was beautiful of form and face” (v 7), was chosen by Ahasuerus, who “loved (her) more than all the (other) women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the (other) virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti” (v 17). It was the year 479 BC, in the “seventh year of his reign” (v 16).

Esther had been raised by her uncle, Mordecai, whose great-grandfather Kish “had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who had been exiled with Jeconiah king of Judah” (Esther 2:6) by Nebuchadnezzar, in the second exile of 597 BC, 118 years prior. When she was selected to join the king's harem, Mordecai had “instructed her that she should not make... known” she was a Jew (v 10).

Apparently Mordecai held a government job that required he “(sit) at the king's gate” (Esther 2:21), and while serving there daily, he failed to prostrate himself before a high ranking official, Haman, who the king had “promoted... over all the princes who were with him” (3:1), which homage the king had commanded. Mordecai's reason for not bowing as all the others did was because “he was a Jew” (v 4).

One is reminded of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, exiled Jews “appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon” (Dan 3:12) who would not “fall down and worship the golden image” (v 10) that Nebuchadnezzar had set up “on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon” (v 1). These were three of the “sons of Israel”, noble youths who, along with Daniel, were carried to Babylon in the first exile of 605 BC when King Jehoiakim was captured. They were miraculously saved in the fiery furnace, to which Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, “Come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!... Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against (their) God... shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way” (Dan 3:26-29). Then the king “caused (them) to prosper” (v 30).

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<sup>28</sup> Xerxes I, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerxes\\_I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerxes_I)

Perhaps the heroic tale of these devoted Jews of several generations ago was widely known by the exiles of Mordecai's day, and their bravery emboldened him. Perhaps Haman demanded more than a simple bow of respect, but an actual prostrating declaration of worship – a payment of “homage” -- as if he were a god, and that Mordecai could not bring himself to do, as that would violate the very first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex 20:3). In any event, Haman grew furious, and decided to take revenge not just on Mordecai alone, but “sought to destroy all the Jews... who were throughout the whole kingdom” (Esther 3:6).

So in the “twelfth year of King Ahasuerus” (Esther 3:7), that is, 474 BC, Haman hatches his plot of retribution through a proposal to the king, fabricated from a slanderous lie and sweetened with a bribe: “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of all other people, and they do not observe the king's laws, so it is not in the king's interest to let them remain. If it is pleasing to the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who carry on the king's business, to put into the king's treasuries” (vs 8,9). One wonders how a mere civil servant acquired such a vast amount of wealth if not for his bent toward deceit, slander and bribery.

The king falls for the lie, and gives Haman his signet ring, a symbol of the king's authority, and tells Haman to keep the silver, and as for the Jews, “do with them as you please” (Esther 3:11). He may have been influenced by the accusation against the Jews he received in the first year of his reign, as recorded in Ezra 4:6. Nevertheless, on the thirteenth day of the first month of the new year, 473 BC, the king's scribes were ordered to write a decree to “the king's satraps, to the governors who were over each province, and to the princes of each people,... written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet ring,... to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month... and to seize their possessions as plunder” (vs 12,13).

The capital city of Susa falls into “confusion” (Esther 3:15), as “in each and every province,... there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay(ing) on sackcloth and ashes (, including Mordecai)... (When she heard of the decree,) Esther... the queen writhed in great anguish” (Esther 4:1-4). She then reaches out to Mordecai to find out how this could have happened, and he relays the entire story, and “order(s) her to go in to the king to implore his favor and to plead with him for her people” (v 8).

Esther is now in a no win situation – if she does nothing, as Mordecai says, “Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews” (Esther 4:13). But if she goes in to the king without having been summoned, she is in danger of being put to death, unless “the king holds out... the golden scepter so that (she) may live” (v 11). But Mordecai implores her with these now famous words: “Who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?” (v 14). Esther's answer: “Thus I will go in to the king, which is (against) the law; and if I perish, I perish” (v 16).

So Esther “put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king’s palace in front of the king’s rooms... and as it happened when the king saw Esther the queen..., she obtained favor in his sight, and the king extended to Esther the golden scepter... So Esther came near” (Esther 5:1,2). The king is so taken with her, that he asks, “What is troubling you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it will be given to you” (v 3). Esther has a plan, and she puts it in to motion: “If it please the king, may the king and Haman come this day to the banquet that I have prepared for him” (v 4).

So the king and Haman come to the banquet, and there, once again, the king asks Esther, “What is your petition, for it shall be granted to you... Even to half of the kingdom...” (Esther 5:6). But still Esther puts off the king, asking, “If I have found favor in the sight of the king,... may the king and Haman come to the banquet which I shall prepare for them... tomorrow(, then) I will do as the king says” (v 8).

Now Haman is “glad and pleased of heart” (Esther 5:9) because the queen has honored him twice in two days, but his joy turns to anger when he is leaving and sees Mordecai in the king’s gate, still refusing to bow down before him. When he complains to his wife and friends, they suggest he build a gallows and then ask the king “to have Mordecai hanged on it” (v 14). So Haman does just that and builds the gallows.

But that night the king “could not sleep” (Esther 6:1), and so he asked that the book of records be read to him. In the book was a record of how Mordecai had thwarted an assassination attempt on the king years before. The king asked, “What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?” (v 3). The answer was, “Nothing.” Just then Haman entered the court to ask the king if he could hang Mordecai, and before he could make his request, the king asked Haman, “What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor? And Haman (thought) to himself, ‘Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?’” (v 6). So Haman suggests the man should be draped in a royal robe, have a crown set on his head, be lifted up on a royal horse, and be led through the city, with a crier announcing, “Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor” (v 9).

So the king said to Haman, “(Then) do so for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king’s gate; do not fall short in anything of all that you have said” (Esther 6:10). At the king’s orders, Haman had to do just that. And when he was done, he “hurried home, mourning, with his head covered” in mortification (v 12). He had no time to pout, though, because the king’s servants “arrived and hastily brought Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared” (v 14).

Let the third banquet begin; the king and Haman are drinking wine with Esther the queen. And again, the king asks, “What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you... Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done” (Esther 7:2). Now Esther sets out the bombshell, answering the king: “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me as my petition, and my people as my request, for we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated. Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have

remained silent, for the trouble would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king,” (vs 3,4). Haman must have been loosening in his bowels about now! King Xerxes stammered, “Who is he, and where is he, who would presume to do thus?” (v 5). Now Esther lowers the boom: “A foe and an enemy, is this wicked Haman!” (v 6).

Haman is “terrified” at this point. The king is livid, and gets up and goes out into the garden to get his thoughts straight. Haman falls onto the couch where Esther is reclined to “beg for his life from Queen Esther” (Esther 7:7). As the king returns, he sees Haman clinging to Esther, and shouts, “Will he even assault the queen with me in the house?” (v 8). And his servants grab Haman and cover his face. One of the servants offers a solution: “Behold, indeed, the gallows standing at Haman’s house... which Haman made for Mordecai... And the king said, ‘Hang him on it’” (v 9).

But now Esther “fell at (the king’s) feet, wept, and implored him to avert the evil scheme of Haman... and his plot which he had devised against the Jews. And the king extended the golden scepter to (her)” (Esther 8:3,4). Now, while it was not possible to revoke the previous decree, he told Esther to “write to the Jews as you see fit, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s signet ring” (v 8). So a new command was written and sent to the governors of all 127 provinces, “granting the Jews who were in each and every city the right to assemble and to defend their lives” (v 11) against anyone who tried to attack them under Haman’s order.

So “on the day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, it was turned to the contrary so that the Jews themselves gained the mastery over those who hated them... Even all the princes of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and those who were doing the king’s business assisted the Jews, because the dread of Mordecai had fallen on them” (Esther 9:1-3). And in Susa the Jews killed “the ten sons of Haman... the Jews’ enemy” (v 10).

The victory of the Jews over their enemies was so great, that the next day they “made it a day of feasting and rejoicing” (Esther 9:17). So Mordecai, who became “greater and greater” (v 4) in King Xerxes’ court, sent letters “to all the Jews who were in all the provinces... obliging them to celebrate the fourteenth (and fifteenth) day of the month Adar... annually, because... it... was turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday... (And) they called these days Purim” (vs 20-22,26). “So these days were to be remembered and celebrated throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and these days of Purim were not to fail from among the Jews, or their memory fade from their descendants,” Esther 9:28.

Nevertheless, there still was no record of a mass movement of Jews back to Judah in reaction to this time of panic turned party. The majority of Jews of the exile remained living in exile throughout all the provinces of the Persian Empire through to the end of Ahasuerus’ reign and into the reign of his successor son Artaxerxes I. Yet there were a significant number of Jews who had returned during Cyrus the Great’s rule 65 years before, led by Zerubbabel. They had managed, despite much opposition, to rebuild the temple, and even dedicate it in 516 BC, in “the sixth year of the reign of King Darius” (Ezra 6:15). But the city of Jerusalem itself remained broken down and unsecured.

## The Second Wave of *Aliyah*

The story is resumed in the seventh chapter of Ezra. There we read that in the seventh year of the reign of King Artaxerxes, that is, in the year 458 BC, the Jewish scribe Ezra, a descendant of Aaron the chief priest, emigrated from Babylon to Israel: "This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses..., and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the LORD his God was upon him... And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month... in the seventh year of the king... (having left Babylon) on the first of the first month," Ezra 7:6-9. Along with Ezra came "some of the sons of Israel and some of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants" (Ezra 7:7). Ezra's intention in returning was to "study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel" (v 10).

The king respected Ezra so much, that he issued him a decree of return: "Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest... I have issued a decree that any of the people of Israel and their priests and the Levites in my kingdom who are willing to go to Jerusalem, may go with you," Ezra 7:12,13. Additionally, the king also contributed an incredible amount of treasure and goods to be used for "the house of their God which is in Jerusalem" (v 16), to include "silver and gold" to buy "bulls and rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their libations" (v 17) to be offered on the altar of the temple, to "do with the rest of the silver and gold" whatever "seems good to (Ezra) and (his) brothers." The treasure also included "silver utensils" and "20 gold bowls" for use in the Temple.

He also issued a decree "to all the treasurers who are in the provinces beyond the River" to provide "up to 100 talents of silver, 100 kors [1 kor = 10 bushels<sup>29</sup>] of wheat, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of oil, and salt as needed" (v 22). The king also granted Ezra the authority to "appoint magistrates and judges" (Ez 7:25) in the Jewish province, and to execute judgment within that province.

So in 458 BC, 80 years after the first return led by Zerrubabel and 58 years after the dedication of the Second Temple, Ezra leads a contingent of exiles from out of Babylon, back to Judah, in a Second Wave of *Aliyah*. Ezra chapter 8 recounts the list of those who came out with him, numbering about 1,500 men and their families, and the protection provided by God as they "journeyed from the river Ahava... to Jerusalem" (Ezra 8:31). On the fourth day after arriving, they handed over the treasures to the priests at the temple, offered burnt offerings "to the God of Israel" (v 35), and delivered the king's edicts to the "king's satraps and... governors in the provinces beyond the River" (v 36).

Ezra's prayer upon their arrival: "For a brief moment grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage... God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of God, to restore its ruins, **and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem,**" Ezra 9:8-9.

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<sup>29</sup> Notes for Ezra 7:22, pg 460, New American Standard Bible, Collins World, 1975

According to the Jewish Encyclopedia of 1906, upon his arrival in Jerusalem, Ezra immediately went to work on his intentions to restore Jewish sovereignty over the city and the Jews, but soon drew resistance from the existing authorities:

“In the seventh year of Artaxerxes I. (458 B.C.) the Babylonian Jews requested that permission should be given to the priest Ezra to visit Palestine, with full power over the Jews there, and to enforce the book of the Law as the will of the king... Ezra first took strong measures against the mixed marriages, coming thereby into conflict with "the people of the land," the Samaritans and their allies. To protect himself against them, **Ezra undertook to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.** Permission for this was not contained in the commission he had received from the king; accordingly the Samaritans and their governor, Rehum, interfered and addressed a letter to the king...”<sup>30</sup>

This then is the time at which the story is picked up in the middle of chapter 4 of the book of Ezra, in a parenthetical insert between verses 5 and 24, intimating that the Jews who had returned with Ezra were now attempting to rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem itself. This is when “the enemies of Judah and Benjamin” (Ezra 4:1) wrote a false accusation against the Jews, and sent it to King Artaxerxes. Here is the account of the writing of the letter: “And in the days of Artaxerxes, (the enemies of Judah there in the land of Judah and Samaria) wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia... a letter against Jerusalem... as follows:... To King Artaxerxes: Your servants, the men in the region beyond the River; and now let it be known to the king, that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem; they are rebuilding the rebellious and evil city, and are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. Now let it be known to the king, that if that city is rebuilt and the walls are finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and it will damage the revenue of the kings,” Ezra 4:7-13. The defamation of the Jews by their enemies is now becoming a common weapon against them, one that will be used over and over for centuries and millennia to come.

The letter suggested the king should search the record books of the previous kings to discover how those of Jerusalem in the past had “incited revolt” (which was true), but then repeated the accusation that if “that city is rebuilt and the walls finished, as a result you will have no possession in the province beyond the River” (Ezra 4:16). In response, King Artaxerxes “sent an answer to Rehum the commander” (v 17) and to his colleagues, stating: “**So, now issue a decree to make these men stop work, that the city may not be rebuilt until a decree issued by me**” (v 21). The king had certainly authorized them to “adorn the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 7:27) with the provided treasures, but he had not authorized the building of the city walls.

As soon as Rehum and his colleagues read the letter, they “went in haste to Jerusalem to the Jews and stopped them by force of arms” (v 23). According to the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia, “the triumph of the Samaritans was complete; the walls were torn down, and the gates were burnt (Neh. i. 3).”

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<sup>30</sup> Artaxerxes I, Richard Gottheil, Eduard Meyer, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1827-artaxerxes-i>



## The Third Wave of *Aliyah*

Broken walls and burnt gates reflected the condition of the city as the book of Nehemiah takes up the narrative of the timeline, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, 445 BC, thirteen years after Ezra had left Babylon: “I (Nehemiah) was in Susa the capitol (when my brother) Hanani... and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped and had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. And they said to me, ‘The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire,’” Neh 1:1-3.

Now Nehemiah was in very privileged circumstances, being a member of the royal court as the personal cupbearer<sup>31</sup> to King Artaxerxes (Neh 1:11). Nevertheless the sad news affected him greatly, and he “sat down and wept... for days,... fasting and praying before the God of heaven” (Neh 1:4). His prayer was one of confession of the sins of Israel, as was the prayer of Daniel and Ezra before him, and a reminding God of the covenant promise: “Remember the word which Thou didst command Thy servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the people; but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell,’” Neh 1:8-9.

Nehemiah asks God to hear his prayer, and to “make Thy servant successful today, and grant him compassion before this man” (Neh 1:11), an apparent reference to the king himself. For Nehemiah, like Esther before him, was planning to violate a taboo in the presence of the sovereign, for the sake of his people. As he next served the king, he allowed sadness to be evident on his face, but mourning before the king of Persia was strictly forbidden (“No one [is] to enter the king’s gate clothed in sackcloth” Esther 4:2). The king noticed: “Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart,” Neh 2:2.

Nehemiah “was very much afraid” (Neh 2:2), but it was too late, he was committed to his cause: “Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?” (v 3). They must have had a very trusting relationship, for, instead of relieving him of his duties or worse, Artaxerxes instead asks, “What would you request?” (v 4). Nehemiah gulped, said a quick prayer, then answered the king: “If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it,” (v 5). It had been over a decade since the king had ordered, “the city may not be rebuilt until a decree by me.” What would his reaction be?

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<sup>31</sup> According to the Virtual Jewish Library, a CUPBEARER is “a high ranking royal official primarily in charge of serving wine to the king. Since he was close to the person of the king, who feared intrigue and the possibility of poisoned food, the cupbearer was required to be a man of irreproachable loyalty capable of winning the king’s complete confidence.” <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/cupbearer>

Nehemiah recorded the king's reaction: "Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, 'How long will your journey be, and when will you return?' **So it pleased the king to send me**, and I gave him a definite time," Neh 2:6. Nehemiah may have even said to himself, "That worked out nicely."

It worked out so well that Nehemiah decided to push for a little bit more: "And I said to the king, 'If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah...'" Neh 2:7. But he wasn't done, he was on a roll: "...And a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city, and for the house to which I will go," v 8. Artaxerxes must have been in a very good mood, for Nehemiah writes, "And the king granted them to me..." (Neh 2:8).

So Nehemiah headed out on his return to Judah, along with "officers of the army and horsemen" (Neh 2:9), and most likely "all (his) servants" (Neh 5:16), and possibly the "one hundred and fifty Jews and officials" who ate at his table in Jerusalem (Neh 5:17), in a third wave of return from Babylon. When he came to the governors of provinces, he "gave them the king's letters" (Neh 2:9), but when "Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about it, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel" (Neh 2:10).

After arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah secretly, in the night, inspected the walls "which were broken down and (the) gates which were consumed by fire" (Neh 2:11-16). After the inspection, He assembled the "Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials" and those who had been attempting to work on the walls, and gave them a pep talk: "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned with fire..." -- very inspiring and motivational -- "...Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach" Neh 2:17. Then Nehemiah told them "how the hand of... God had been favorable to (him)", and also about the king's authorizing and encouraging letters. The Jews were impressed by his speech, and responded, "Let us arise and build!" (v 18). "So they put their hands to good work" (v 18).

Chapter 3 of Nehemiah recounts then the multitude of families who set about to rebuild the walls, each taking a portion, including the reconstructing of various gates. But Sanballat was furious, and mocked them in Samaria, saying, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?" (Neh 4:2). Tobiah the Ammonite chimed in with his own revilement: "Even what they are building – if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!" (v 3). For while the "whole wall was (finally) joined together" by the work of the families living around the city, it was only "half its (normal) height" (v 6). Nehemiah offered a prayer requesting vindication: "Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before Thee, for they have demoralized the builders," Neh 4:4.

As the Jews continued their work, so that the “breaches began to be closed” (Neh 4:7), the non-Jews of the surrounding provinces, Sanballat and the Samaritans who had been transplanted there from other lands by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon<sup>32</sup> over 200 years prior, Tobiah the Ammonite, the Arabs, the Ammonites (today known as Jordanians), and the Ashdodites “conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem” (v 8).

Nehemiah, who had been appointed “governor in the land of Judah” (Neh 5:14) by Artaxerxes, planned a defense, by stationing families with “swords, spears, and bows” (Neh 4:13). When their enemies heard they were ready for them, they reconsidered the attack, so that the Jews “returned to the wall, each one to his work” (v 15). But Nehemiah kept a defensive plan in place, in which half the people would carry on the work while the other half would hold “the spears, the shields, the bows, and the breastplates” (v 16). Even those rebuilding “wore his sword girded at his side as he built” (v 18) and slept within the city, so that “they may be a guard... by night and a laborer by day” (v 22).

Finally the wall was rebuilt, with “no breach remain(ing) in it” (Neh 6:1). The wall had been completed in fifty-two days (v 15), and finally Nehemiah “set up the doors” (Neh 7:1) and appointed his brother Hanani as the mayor of the city of Jerusalem (v 2) and established security measures. He also reformed taxation and abolished usury for the Jewish province, requiring debt forgiveness and return of foreclosed property.

Another very significant reform was the restoration of Mosaic Law observance. After the completion of the wall, on the first day of the seventh month (Neh 7:73; 8:2), the month of Tishrei, “all the people gathered as one man at the square... in front of the Water Gate, and... asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel... And he read from it... from early morning until midday,... and all the people were attentive... (He) stood at a wooden podium... made for (that) purpose... And (when) Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people... all the people stood up” (Neh 8:1-5).

Then Ezra “blessed the LORD the great God, and all the people answered, ‘Amen, (and) Amen!’ while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground” (Neh 8:6). The leaders, scribes and Levites “explained the law to the people... so that they understood the reading” (vs 7,8). Nehemiah the governor and Ezra the priest declared, “This day is holy to the LORD your God” (v 9) and sent the people away to “celebrate a great festival” because they “understood the words” (v 12). The people then celebrated the Feast of Booths, which they had “not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day” (v 17).

Finally, on the twenty-fourth day of that same month, the “descendants of Israel” gathered in fasting to dedicate themselves, recite their history (Chapter 9), and to re-establish the covenant by a signed and sealed document: “All those who (have) separated themselves... to the Law of God... are taking on themselves a curse and an oath to walk in God’s law... and (to) not neglect the house of our God” (Neh 10:28-39).

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<sup>32</sup> Ezra 4:2

The city of Jerusalem itself, while “large and spacious”, had very few people living in it at this time (Neh 7:4), because even the houses had been destroyed by the Babylonians<sup>33</sup> 150 years prior. While the “leaders of the people” lived in Jerusalem, the rest of the people lived in other towns and cities surrounding it (Neh 11:1), “each on his own inheritance” (v 20). To solve the problem, the people “cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city... And the people blessed all the men who volunteered to live (there)” (vs 1,2).

So now the city was populated by the “heads of the provinces,... the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon’s servants” (v 3), as well as some of the sons of Judah and Benjamin (v 4) and gatekeepers “who kept watch at the gates” (v 19), and the ten percent of all the people, those who agreed to move to the holy city. No doubt they continued to fortify it for their own protection, by increasing the height and width of the walls while they built and restored their houses in which to live.

Nehemiah, in the meantime, had returned to Susa in the “thirty-second year of Artaxerxes” (433 BC). For “twelve years” (Neh 5:14) he had dedicated himself to “the work on (the) wall” (v 16), but under his prior obligation to the king (Neh 2:6) he was required to return to Babylon. “After some time” however, Nehemiah once again “asked leave from the king” (Neh 13:6) and returned to Jerusalem, perhaps as early as 432 BC<sup>34</sup>.

Once back, Nehemiah discovered that “Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of... God” (Neh 13:4), being “related to Tobiah” the Ammonite, had “prepared a large room for him” that had previously been reserved for storing grain offerings and other tithes and contributions (v 5). Tobiah was an “official”, likely a diplomat of or observer for the Ammonites in the Judean province, who used his influence to secure a “room... in the courts of the house of God” (v 7) for his own self-exaltation. Nehemiah immediately evicted him, by throwing “all of Tobiah’s household goods out of the room” (v 8), and ordered that the room be “cleansed” and the offerings and tithes be returned to their proper place (v 9).

It was after this<sup>35</sup> that there was held the “dedication of the wall of Jerusalem” (Neh 12:27) presided over by Nehemiah (v 31), perhaps around 430 BC. Once again all the Levites were requested to return to Jerusalem “so that they might celebrate the dedication with gladness” (v 27), along with the singers and leaders of Judah (vs 28,31). Once assembled, “the priests and the Levites purified themselves; they also purified the people, the gates, and the wall” (v 30). By this time the wall was substantial, surrounding the entire city, so that the celebrants, the singers, the priests and the leaders, were able to stand in two great assemblies “on top of the wall” (Neh 12:31), to proceed on top, one group led by Ezra in one direction and the other group followed by Nehemiah in the opposite direction, stopping at the temple to offer sacrifices (vs 31-43).

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<sup>33</sup> 2 Kings 25:8,9 “Nebuzaradan... a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem; and he burned the house of the LORD, the king’s house, and **all the houses of Jerusalem**; even every great house he burned with fire.”

<sup>34</sup> Malachi, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malachi>

<sup>35</sup> The Dedication of the Wall, <http://bible.ucg.org/bible-commentary/Nehemiah/Dedication-of-the-wall;-Levitical-duties;-Separation-from-foreigners/>

## Return is a Work of God

Daniel, after reading the prophetic words of Jeremiah and realizing the seventy years are up and the time of return is now, prays: “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who **keeps His covenant** and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, we have sinned... Indeed all Israel has transgressed Thy law and turned aside... **So the curse has been poured out on us**, along **with the oath which is written in the law of Moses** the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. Thus he has confirmed His words... **As it is written in the law of Moses**, all this calamity has come on us; for the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our **God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done...**” Dan 9:4,5,11-14.

The “curse... written in the law of Moses” of which Daniel speaks is that found in Deuteronomy 28: “If you (children of Israel) are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book... then the LORD will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants... and you shall be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it... (And) the LORD will scatter you among all peoples” (vs 58-63).

Yet even in bringing all the calamity, God had promised to keep the covenant: “So it shall become when all these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all the nations where the LORD your God has banished you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you..., then **the LORD your God will restore you from captivity**, and will have compassion on you, **and will gather you again from all the peoples** where the LORD your God has scattered you,” Deut 30:1-3.

The covenant God was bound to was this: “By loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice... this is your life and the length of your days, that you **may live in the land which the LORD SWORE TO YOUR FATHERS, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, TO GIVE THEM,**” Deut 30:20. Because God had sworn an unconditional oath to Abraham to give his descendants “the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession” (Gen 17:8, 22:16; 24:7), he was bound to bring them back by his own hand, as a work of his own faithfulness.

Daniel, a student of the Tanakh, including the first five books of the Law of Moses, knew that God was bound by his own oaths, and so prayed: “O Lord, in accordance with all Thy righteous acts [works], let now Thine anger and Thy wrath turn away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain,... (and) let Thy face shine on Thy desolate sanctuary... O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and **take action!**” Dan 9:16-19. The action God took was to influence King Cyrus, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, to “issue the command” to all the Jews in his kingdom to “go up to Jerusalem ... and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel” (Ezra 1:3). God then influenced Zerubbabel, Ezra and finally Nehemiah to lead the exiles back to the land of promise, to rebuild the temple, and the holy city Jerusalem.

Nehemiah recognized the work of God in bringing the exiles back: “And they are Thy servants and Thy people whom Thou didst redeem **by Thy great power and by Thy strong hand,**” Neh 1:10. Nehemiah also recognized it was God who worked to allow he himself to return: “And the king granted them to me because **the good hand of my God was on me,**” Neh 2:8.

As the returning Jews faced resistance from those living in the land, Nehemiah encouraged them, reminding them that it was God working to restore the city: “Do not be afraid... remember the Lord who is great and awesome... **Our God will fight for us,**” Neh 4:14, 20. And when they were finally successful, Nehemiah reminded them that it was God who had made it possible: “When all the nations surrounding us saw (the walls of Jerusalem rebuilt), they lost their confidence; for they recognized that **this work had been accomplished with the help of our God,**” Neh 6:16.

It was just as Jeremiah had prophesied – God had performed his work: “Behold, days are coming... when it will no longer be said, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them.’ **For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers,**” Jeremiah 16:13-15.

It was God who took the credit for rebuilding the city: “It is I who says of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be inhabited!’ And of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall be built.’ **And I will raise up her ruins again...** It is I who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd! **And he will perform all My desire.**’ And he declares of Jerusalem, ‘She will be built,’” Isaiah:44:26,28.

It was for this purpose that God performed his work of return from Babylon: “**(T)hat men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me.** I am the LORD, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; **I am the LORD who does all these (works),**” Isaiah 45:6,7. As the oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi declares: “‘I am a great King,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘**and My Name is (to be revered) among the nations,**’” Mal 1:14.

The book of Malachi, the last book of the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible, written during the time of Nehemiah, gives a prophecy from God of the coming of His “messenger”, saying: “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple,... the Messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” Mal 3:1. The prophecy from God is repeated as the last words of the Tanakh: “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet... And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse,” Mal 4:5,6.

Through the next four hundred years, the history of the Jews is tied to the conflicts of the empires, from Persian to Greek to Roman, until Jesus came saying, “All the prophets and the Law prophesied until John (the Baptist). And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come” (Mt 11:13,14). “And Jesus entered the temple” (Mt 21:12).

## **God Collects Israel**

### **THIRD: Out of All the Nations**

*“I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, “Give them up!” And to the south, “Do not hold them back.” Bring my sons from afar, and My daughters **from the ends of the earth**”* Isaiah 43:5-6

Daniel chapter 10 begins: “In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel.” Daniel had been “mourning for three entire weeks” (v 2) sitting on the banks of the Tigris. There a “certain man (appeared) dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold... (with) a body... like beryl. His face (was like) lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult” (vs 5,6).

While the men who were with Daniel could not see the man, they nevertheless were filled with a “great dread” and ran away, leaving Daniel all alone. Daniel was so shaken he fell on the ground unconscious (v 9). But the man touched him, and sat Daniel up on his hands and knees, trembling (v 10). The man then told Daniel: “I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for (this) vision pertains to the days yet future.” And he strengthened Daniel (v 18).

The man then gave Daniel an account of the coming succession of kings, empires and events that would affect his people, the Jews: “Behold, the prince of Greece is about to come... (But first,) three more kings are going to arise in Persia (after Cyrus). Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them... (and) arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece. And a mighty king will arise (from there, who will) rule with great authority and do as he pleases. But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants...” (Dan 10:20; 11:2-4).

The man had just described the coming succession of the kings of Persia, the conquering of the Persian empire by Alexander the Great of Greece, and the partitioning of his empire after his death among the Successors, the *Diadochi*, the six generals of Alexander’s conquering armies, including Seleucus I Nicator and Ptolemy I Soter.

The prophetic narrative continued, from verse 5 to 13, describing back and forth battles between the successive Seleucid rulers of Syria-Asia Minor, the kings “of the North”, and the Ptolemaic rulers, the kings “of the South” ruling Egypt, which wars would affect the Jewish provinces of Judea and Samaria caught between them. Even the detail of the marriage of Berenice Phernophorus, daughter of Ptolemy II, to Antiochus II Theos of the Seleucid Empire, an element of a peace agreement between the two empires, and her murder at the hands of Laodice, is prophesied there in verse 6<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berenice\\_\(Seleucid\\_queen\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berenice_(Seleucid_queen))

The Maccabean revolt<sup>37</sup> of 167 – 160 BC is described in verse 14, but the resulting semi-autonomous Jewish Hasmonean Dynasty that lasted over 100 years was brought to an end – “but they will fall down” (v 14) – by the invasion of Judea by Rome in 63 BC<sup>38</sup>. Roman General Pompey had already conquered Seleucid Syria in the Third Mithridatic War<sup>39</sup>. Now his siege of Jerusalem<sup>40</sup> is prophetically described by the messenger with flaming eyes in verses 15 and 16: “Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege mound, and capture a well-fortified city... no one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land [a reference to Israel<sup>41</sup>], with destruction in his hand.”

This siege of Jerusalem by Pompey is recorded by the first century AD Jewish historian Titus Flavius Josephus (Yosef ben Matityahu) in his *Antiquities of the Jews – Book XIV*<sup>42</sup>:

So Pompey sent his lieutenant Piso with an army, and placed garrisons both in the city, and in the palace to secure them; and fortified the houses that joined to the temple... And... he encompassed all the places thereabout with a wall. . . ., Pompey pitched his camp within [the wall,] on the north part of the temple... But even on that side there were great towers, and a ditch had been dug, and a deep valley begirt it round about... [T]he bridge on which Pompey had gotten in was broken down: however a bank was raised day by day, with a great deal of labor; while the Romans cut down materials for it from the places round about. And when this bank was sufficiently raised, and the ditch filled up... he brought his mechanical engines, and battering rams from Tyre: and placing them on the bank, he battered the temple with the stones that were thrown against it... [T]he priests were not at all hindered from their sacred ministrations by their fear during this siege; but did still, twice a day, in the morning, and about the ninth hour, offer their sacrifices on the altar... [despite] the stones that were thrown among them. [So] the city were taken on the third month, on the day of the fast, upon the hundred seventy ninth olympiad;... [A]nd the enemy... fell upon them, and cut the throats of those that were in the temple; yet could not those that offered the sacrifices be compelled to run away; neither by the fear they were in of their own lives; nor by the number that were already slain. As thinking it better to suffer whatever came upon them, at their very altars, than to omit any thing that their laws required of them...; [this] is the real truth; I appeal to those that have written of the acts of Pompey.

The Daniel 11 prophecy then describes the intrigues of Cleopatra in Egypt (“he will... bring[ ] a proposal of peace... and give him the daughter of women to ruin it” v 17), the audacious revolt of Julius Caesar against Pompey in 49 BC (“he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many, but a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him... So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land” v 19), Caesar’s assassination (“but he will stumble and fall down and be found no more” v 19), and the rise of his successor Caesar Augustus (“in his place one will arise who will send an

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<sup>37</sup> <https://www.ancient.eu/article/827/the-maccabean-revolt/>

<sup>38</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasmonean\\_dynasty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasmonean_dynasty)

<sup>39</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third\\_Mithridatic\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Mithridatic_War)

<sup>40</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege\\_of\\_Jerusalem\\_\(63\\_BC\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_(63_BC))

<sup>41</sup> Cambridge Bible Commentary <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/daniel/11-16.htm>

<sup>42</sup> <https://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-14.html>



[extractor of tribute<sup>43</sup>] through the Jewel of his kingdom” v 20 – see *Luke 2:1*: “Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a [tax<sup>44</sup>] census be taken in all the inhabited earth”). This would have been around 6-4 BC, when “Quirinius [Cyrenius] was governor of Syria” [actually, *Gk hegemoeuo*, acting as procurator or governor – see “*Quirinius the Governor of Syria*”<sup>45</sup>] (v 2), the most probable time of the birth of Jesus Christ (“And it came about that while [Joseph and Mary] were there [in Bethlehem for the tax census], the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son” *Luke 2:6,7*).

It was just as the angels announced to shepherds there in that region of Bethlehem, with “the glory of the Lord (shining) around them”: “Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord,” *Luke 2:9-11*. “And when eight days were completed (so as to circumcise him), His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb,” v 21.

This is now the time of the coming of “Messiah the Prince”, as Gabriel described to Daniel two years before, in the first year Cyrus the king, recorded in Daniel chapter 9. The Seven Weeks and Sixty-Two Weeks are just about complete. Messiah has been born: “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us... And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace,” *Isaiah 9:6*.

173,880 days are counting down, to the very day that Messiah will appear, from the day the decree to restore and rebuild the city of Jerusalem given by Artaxerxes I to Nehemiah, until Nisan 10, ~32 AD, the day Jesus enters the gates of Jerusalem to the shouts of “Hosanna!” by the multitudes assembled there for the Passover: “As they approached Jerusalem... they found a colt... and put their garments on it; and (Jesus) sat upon it. And many (of the multitude) spread their garments in the road, and others spread leafy branches... And those who went before, and those who followed after, were crying out, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!’” *Mark 11:1-10*.

The Daniel 11 prophecy of the succession of rulers continues, however: “Yet within a few days he will be shattered, though neither in anger nor in battle,” *Dan 11:20*. This is the death of Augustus Caesar in 14 AD from an illness, just a month before his 76th birthday<sup>46</sup>. His successor is Tiberius Julius Caesar. It is said he didn’t even want to be the emperor, but was remembered as a “dark, reclusive and somber ruler” who was called by first century AD Roman author Pliny the Elder, “the gloomiest of men”<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Explanatory note on the word “oppressor” *Daniel 11:20*, New American Standard Bible, Collins World 1975

<sup>44</sup> “All the world should be taxed” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/classics/andrews-the-life-of-our-lord-upon-the-earth/part-i/the-taxing-of-augustus.html>

<sup>45</sup> *Quirinius the Governor of Syria* -- Sir William Mitchell Ramsay

[https://biblehub.com/library/ramsay/was\\_christ\\_born\\_in\\_bethlehem/chapter\\_11\\_quirinius\\_the\\_governor.htm](https://biblehub.com/library/ramsay/was_christ_born_in_bethlehem/chapter_11_quirinius_the_governor.htm)

<sup>46</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberius>

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

Daniel's angelic seer then tells him: "And in (the oppressor's) place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue," Dan 11:21. Augustus had consolidated the empire during his reign and "initiated an era of relative peace known as the *Pax Romana*<sup>48</sup>". The circumstances of Tiberius' ascension to emperor was unquestionably marked by "intrigue." He had married Vipsania Agrippina, the daughter of a respected general and best friend of the Emperor Augustus, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, who himself was married to Augustus' daughter Julia, and thereby an apparent heir to the title. Tiberius' mother Livia Drusilla divorced Tiberius' father, in order to marry Emperor Augustus, who divorced his wife Scribonia.

When General Agrippa died, in order to secure Tiberius as the heir, Augustus, some say under the influence of Tiberius' mother Livia<sup>49</sup>, requested that Tiberius divorce Vipsania so as to marry Agrippa's widow Julia, Augustus' daughter, thereby elevating Tiberius to next in line for ascension. Despite being happily married to Vipsania, he grudgingly agreed to the arrangement. Augustus then adopted Tiberius in 4 AD. Other potential successors were mysteriously murdered, and some believed Livia was involved.

Upon Augustus' death, Livia was granted the name Julia Augusta, and with it retained her position of power and influence, and Tiberius was elevated to the position of Emperor. As his tenure progressed, rumors of his sexual perversity, cruelty and tyrannical vengeance grew. After his death, the Senate refused to vote Tiberius the divine honors that had been paid to his father, and "mobs filled the streets yelling 'To the Tiber with Tiberius!'"<sup>50</sup>, a reference to the practice of throwing criminals' dead bodies into the river rather than burying them. Despite his exceptional political and military leadership, history remembers him as a truly "despicable" person.

Daniel's angelic visitor decreed about this king and his successor: "And the overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the Prince of the Covenant," Dan 11:22. This is one and the same prophecy given to Daniel previously by Gabriel about the events to come at the time the Seven and Sixty-Two Weeks have come to their end: "Until Messiah the Prince (comes) there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks... Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined," Dan 9:26.

These are the tragic events prophesied by both visions, to occur after the sixty-two weeks are ended: Messiah will be cut off (Dan 9:26) / the Prince of the Covenant will be shattered (Dan 11:22); the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary, its end coming with a flood of forces, bringing war (Dan 9:26) / the overflowing forces will flood out from the king of the North, shattering everything before it (Dan 11:22).

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<sup>48</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus>

<sup>49</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Livia>

<sup>50</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberius>

But why would the city of Jerusalem and the sanctuary – the Temple -- be destroyed? In the past, the destruction of the city and temple was a judgment from God as a direct consequence of the disobedience of the kings, the leadership of Israel, and the people following the leadership into that disobedience. Would this be the case once again?

As he prepared to go up to Jerusalem for the last time, Jesus explained to his disciples why he was prophesied by Daniel to be “cut off”: “The Son of Man will be delivered up to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him up to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him... (For) the Son of Man... (came) to give His life a ransom for many,” Matt 20:18,19,28. As He told them after his resurrection, “All things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled... Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead... that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations,” Luke 24:44-47.

He had come to fulfill the words of Isaiah -- “A Redeemer will come to Zion...” Is 59:20 – and the words of Zechariah: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!... Behold, your king is coming to you... endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey” Zech 9:9. As Isaiah wrote: “(Yet) He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him... (Rather) He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows... Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; (He was) stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed... The LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him,” Is 53:2-6.

Jesus preached to and taught the common people of Israel, the “multitudes”, who welcomed him and believed in him, as he performed miracles of healing and restoration: “Many of the multitude believed in Him... saying, ‘When (Messiah) shall come, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?’” (John 7:31). But he was constantly harassed, rejected, and accused of blasphemy by the leaders, the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, priests, and elders of the Sanhedrin, the supreme council and tribunal of Jewish officials, headed by the High Priest.

Jesus in turn called them “hypocrites” who saddled the people with burdensome traditions: “The scribes and Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses... but do not do according to their deeds; for... they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men’s shoulders... They love the place of honor... and the chief seats in the synagogues... and being called... Rabbi... (But they) shut off the kingdom of heaven from men... (They)... outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly (they) are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness,” Matt 23:2-4,6,7,13,28.

This hypocrisy and rejection by the leadership was prophesied by Isaiah: “Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote, therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wonderously marvelous; (so that) the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be concealed,” Is 29:13,14.

The scribes, priests, Pharisees, and elders, "The Jews", as the Apostle John called them, gathered around Jesus, demanding, "If You are the Christ, tell us plainly!" Jesus answered plainly: "I told you, (but) you do not believe... because you are not of My sheep," Jn 10:24,25. It was because of this rejection by the leaders that Jesus declared, "Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it," Matt 21:43. Yet that was exactly what the chief priests and Pharisees feared the most: "'If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation'... So from that day on they planned together to kill him," Jn 11:48,53.

This judgment upon the nation's leadership was also prophesied by Isaiah: "I will destine you for the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter. Because I called, but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not hear. And you did evil in My sight, and chose that in which I did not delight," Is 65:12. "So I will choose their punishments, and I will bring on them what they dread... They will be put to shame, a voice of uproar from the city, a voice from the temple, the voice of the LORD who is rendering recompense to His enemies," Is 66:4-6.

While Jesus had taught the way of redemption, proving he was the Messiah by healing the deaf, blind, and lame, the "chief priests and the elders of the people... gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth, and kill Him" (Matt 26:3,4). So as Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "knowing that His hour had come" (John 13:1), a "great multitude with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and elders of the people... laid hands on Jesus and seized Him," Matt 26:47,50. And there in the court of the high priest, "the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they might put Him to death," Matt 26:59.

Isaiah saw this day coming: "On the day the deaf shall hear words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see, (when) the afflicted also shall increase their gladness in the LORD, and the needy of mankind shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, (that is when) the ruthless will come to an end, and the scorner will be finished; indeed all who are intent on doing evil will be cut off, (those) who cause a Person to be indicted by a (false) word, and ensnare Him who adjudicates at the gate, and defraud the One in the right with meaningless arguments," Is 29:18-21.

As Jesus said to those of the mob who came by night to seize him, "Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled" (Matt 26:55,56). So once in the court of the leaders of the Jews, "the high priest stood up and said to (Jesus),... 'I adjure you by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God!' Jesus (answered), 'You have said it yourself...' (Matt 26:63,64). And the priests and the elders of the Sanhedrin screamed, "'He is worthy of death!' Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and... slapped Him," (vs 66,67). His father David saw this day: "Dogs have surrounded Me; a band of evildoers has encompassed Me," Ps 22:16.

Then in the morning, “all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death, and they bound Him, and led Him... to Pilate the (Roman Gentile) governor... And the governor questioned Him, saying, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ And Jesus said to him, ‘It is as you say’... But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitudes to ask (him)... to put Jesus to death... They all said, ‘Let Him be crucified!’... And all the people (they had assembled as a mob)... said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children!’ Then (Pilate)... scourged (Jesus) and delivered (Him) over to be crucified,” Matt 27:1,2,11,20,22,25,26.

After entering Jerusalem hailed as “the Son of David” by the people, Jesus, aware of the death plot against him, prophesied the judgment that was going to come down against the leaders of the Jews: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you... say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ Consequently you bear witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers! You serpents, you brood of vipers! How shall you escape the sentence of hell?

“Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah<sup>51</sup>, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar,” Matt 23:29-35.

As Jesus came out of the temple, having just pronounced this judgment against the scribes and Pharisees, his disciples “came up to point out the temple buildings to Him,” (Matt 24:1). Luke writes they were admiring the temple, “that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts,” (Lk 21:5). But Jesus told them, “Do you not see (what is to become of) all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down,” Matt 24:2.

The disciples immediately questioned him: “Teacher, when... will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” Luke 21:7. Jesus told them: “They will lay hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony... But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death... (But) by your perseverance you will win your souls.

“But (to answer your question directly), when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city; because these are the days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Woe to those who are with child and

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<sup>51</sup> <https://jamesbradfordpate.wordpress.com/2016/03/25/the-martyrdom-of-zechariah-in-rabbinic-literature-and-matthew-2335/>

to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles,” Luke 21:12,13,16,19-24.

The timing of this “desolation” of the temple so that “not one stone will be left upon another”, Jesus had already revealed to the scribes and Pharisees as he taught in the temple: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and cummin, (but) have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others... Fill up the measure of the guilt of your fathers... Upon you (shall) fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth... Truly I say to you, **all (this guilt) shall come upon this generation!** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, (but) you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the LORD!’” Matt 23:23,32,36-39.

A “generation” in prophetic terms is considered 40 years, the length of time the children of Israel were sentenced to wander, after rebelling against Moses<sup>52</sup>, before they were allowed into the Promised Land: “So the LORD’s anger burned against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness **forty years**, until the entire **generation** of those who had done evil in the sight of the LORD was destroyed,” Num 32:13.

Jesus had set the date for execution of the judgment of desolation: within that generation living at that time, within forty years of his having sentenced them as guilty. The year was ~32 AD. Within 40 years, sometime before 72 AD, armies would surround Jerusalem, the stones of the temple would be toppled so that “not one stone will be left upon another”, the people would be scattered, and Jerusalem would be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles “until the times of the Gentiles” were completed.

In 66 AD the Jews revolted against Roman rule. In response, Emperor Nero dispatched General Vespasian, who overwhelmed the Jewish forces, finally forcing them to retreat into Jerusalem itself by 69 AD. That year Vespasian became emperor, and turned the work of defeating the Jews over to General Titus, who, in 70 AD, laid siege to the city. By August, he had “breached the final defenses and massacred the remaining population,... destroy(ing) the Second Temple”<sup>53</sup> in the process. The city and the temple were now destroyed, the people slaughtered and scattered, and their short rebellion over.

As Isaiah prophesied: “Go and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand.’ ... Then I said, ‘Lord, how long?’ And He answered, ‘Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, house are without people, and the land is utterly desolate; the LORD has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land...” Is 6:9-12.

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<sup>52</sup> Numbers 14:1-10

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/event/Siege-of-Jerusalem-70>

## A Timeline is Given

While the books of Daniel and Esther give a glimpse into Jewish life when in Babylonian/Persian exile, secular history now tells the story of the Jews who were scattered into all the nations of the civilized world following the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. In Esther it is described that the Jews were living “in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far” (Esther 9:20), both in the capital city of Susa (9:18) and “in each and every province, and in each and every city” (8:17), and also in “the rural areas, (and) the rural towns” (9:19). Modern secular Jewish historian Max I. Dimont, in his 1962 book “Jews, God and History”, wrote: “In the second century A.D., the majority of Jews were stateless and dispersed into every corner of the Roman world, from India to the Atlantic Ocean, over three continents, two empires, and dozens of nations.”<sup>54</sup>

And just as the prophet Jeremiah gave a timeline for the return of the Jews from Babylon – “When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill my good word to you, to bring you back to this place” (Jer 29:10) – so the prophet Hosea gave a timeline for the return of the Jews from out of all the nations of the earth: “Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him,” Hos 6:1-2.

As St. Peter noted, “Do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet 3:8). Peter was speaking in the context of “the day of the Lord” (v 10), when the events of “His coming” (v 4) and the “day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (v 7) would transpire, culminating with the final event in which “the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up” (v 10). This “day” of the Lord is described in Revelation 20:4 as lasting a thousand years: “(The saints) came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

Two “days” in this context would be two thousand years. If that is counted explicitly in “prophetic” years of 360 days each, there would be 720,000 earth days in that time span, or 1,971.25 years as counted in current 365.25 solar day years. Counting 1,971 years from 70 AD, the year Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed, one would arrive at the year 2041 AD, a date fast approaching. “After two days” – according to Hosea’s prophecy – God will “revive” Israel, and sometime during the “third day” Israel will be raised up so they “may live before Him.”

According to the prophecy, two thousand years must transpire before God will heal Israel, but after that, God WILL raise them up and they WILL live before Him as His People, just as Ezekiel prophesied: “I will take you from the nations, gather you from all

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<sup>54</sup> Pg 123, II: The Age of the “Apikorsim”, Ten, A New Deal for Diaspora, Jews, God and History, Max I. Dimont, Mentor, 1962

the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. **AND YOU WILL LIVE IN THE LAND THAT I GAVE TO YOUR FOREFATHERS; SO YOU WILL BE MY PEOPLE, AND I WILL BE YOUR GOD,**" Ezekiel 36:24-28.

Before Israel can "live in the land", before they can be revived so as to "return to the LORD" and be healed, and "live before Him" as His special People, the Jews must first be restored to the land of Israel, for as Jesus decreed, they have "fall(en) by the edge of the sword, and (have been) **led captive into all the nations**; and Jerusalem (has been) trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles (are to) be fulfilled," Luke 21:24. As Ezekiel declared the word of the Lord: "I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land."

That returning to the Land was prophesied over and over again by the prophets as a prerequisite to the coming of the Son of David to reign over his kingdom: "'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, "The LORD our righteousness." Therefore behold, the days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when they will no longer say, "As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt," but, "As the LORD lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them." **THEN THEY WILL LIVE ON THEIR OWN SOIL.**'" Jeremiah 23:5-8.

Zechariah repeated the promise: "Thus says the LORD, 'I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth... Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; and I will bring them back, and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem, and they will be My people and I will be their God in truth and righteousness,'" Zech 8:3,8.

Once they are returned to the land a third time, they can never be stripped from the land again: "'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'When... I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit. I will also plant them on their land, and **they will NOT AGAIN BE ROOTED OUT FROM THEIR LAND WHICH I HAVE GIVEN THEM,**' says the LORD your God," Amos 9:13-15.

The restoration doesn't happen all at once; rather, it is progressive, as recounted metaphorically in Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones: "'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel... I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.'" Ezekiel 37:11,12.



## Affliction Prompts Return

Ezekiel was shown a vision in which God set him down “in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones,... and lo, they were very dry,” Ez 37:1,2. God asks the prophet, “Can these bones live?” Ezekiel answers, “(Only) you know.” So God tells him to prophesy over them, saying, “Thus says the Lord GOD..., ‘Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. And I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin, and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD,” (vss 3-6).

So Ezekiel prophesies as he was told, and the scattered bones started to move and rattle, and they came together in his vision, “bone to its bone.” Then the skeletons grew sinew, and then muscles, and then skin covered them, but as Ezekiel watched, “there was no breath in them,” (v 8). So God told Ezekiel to prophesy once again, this time saying, “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life,” (v 9). So the prophet prophesies, “and the breath came into them, and they came to life, and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army,” (v 10).

Then God tells Ezekiel the meaning of the vision, which was a figurative analogy: the *tenor* of the metaphor, the actual thing being represented by the imagery (the *vehicle*) of the bones, is “the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off,’” (Ez 37:11). God’s answer to their cry is to “bring (them) into the land of Israel” where he will “put (His) Spirit within (them), and (they) will come to life, and (He) will place (them) on (their) own land. Then (they) will know that (He), the LORD, (has) spoken and done it,” (vs 12-14).

Just as affliction came upon the sons of Jacob in Egypt, and upon the Jews in Babylon, prompting them to cry to the Lord for relief, so affliction came upon the Jews in the third exile, as they were scattered throughout the nations of the world. Egypt’s affliction took the form of harsh slavery; Babylon’s affliction was the fear of Haman’s treacherous plot of annihilation. The affliction of the third exile culminated in the Jews of Europe standing naked behind the barbed wire fences of Nazi death camps, so emaciated they appeared as nothing but bones, waiting for death in a shower of poison gas and their corpses to be consumed in crematory ovens. The metaphor of the dry bones was nearly literal.

The solution to all three afflictions was for God to bring them back to the Promised Land, in a show of his power and might. To force Egypt to comply, he brought the plagues and the destruction of Pharaoh’s army. To defeat Haman’s plot, he used Esther to coerce the King to execute Haman and grant the Jews the right to defend themselves. To rescue the Jews of Europe, he gave a great victory to the Allies over the Nazi war machine, and set the prisoners free. In each case, He then set about performing his miraculous Work of Collecting Israel back to the Land, after 400 years, after 70 years, and upon approaching 2,000 years.

## Return is a Work of God

The pagan Roman Empire, the Christian Holy Roman Empire, the Eastern Byzantine Empire, the Persians, the Mohammedans, the Crusaders, the Mamelukes, Ottoman Turks, Napoleon, and the Turks again, each controlled Palestine in their turn from 70 AD into the 1920s. Each rule either allowed a few isolated Jews to live in peace in the land, or prompted their flight to safety. The land blossomed at times under caretakers, or was pillaged and left desolate by invaders.

Not before 1860 did a restoration of a Jewish state cross the minds of anyone as being within the realm of possibility. Certainly there was the hope within the hearts of individual Jews to one day have their children's children led back to the Promised Land by the coming of their Messiah, but to make that happen through any human or political effort seemed blasphemous. But then Moses Hess (1812-1875) wrote a series of books advocating the return of Jews to Palestine, an idea that came to be called Zionism, and the thought took hold in the minds of intellectuals in Europe and Russia. In the 1880s Zionists began taking action, by encouraging the purchase of land in Palestine for future Jewish emigration.

In 1896 Theodor Herzl wrote *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) and the idea of Zionism was organized into a politically active movement. The rich Jews rejected Herzl, and many Reformed rabbis attacked him; but "the poor, the ignorant, and the orthodox flocked to his banner."<sup>55</sup> Then, in 1903, at his Zionist Congress meeting, Herzl proposed abandoning Palestine for Uganda, as offered to him by the British government, and his movement turned on him. He died the following year. But the effort to purchase Palestinian soil took on new life. Despite Arab and Turkish landholders inflating prices of near worthless plots, the Zionists kept buying. Fast forward: by 1948, the Zionists "had paid millions of dollars for 250,000 acres of desert land, had settled 83,000 Jews on the land, had founded 233 villages, and had planted 5,000,000 trees."<sup>56</sup>

Nevertheless, the cause was almost lost before it started. According to Jewish secular historian Max Dimont, "World War I [1914–1918] almost killed the Zionist movement."<sup>57</sup> The Ottomans sided with Germany, deported 12,000 Jews and made Zionism illegal, but the Jews sided with Britain and made significant contributions, in money and scientific expertise, to the Allied war effort. In gratitude, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917, stating its support of "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."<sup>58</sup>

Lord Arthur James Balfour was the Foreign Secretary in the British Cabinet. According to Dimont, Balfour was "a deeply religious man, (who) felt that Christianity owed the Jews an immeasurable debt. He was a Christian Zionist who... saw the Bible as a living thing

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<sup>55</sup> Pg 412, *Jews, God and History*, Max I. Dimont, Mentor, copyright 1962

<sup>56</sup> Pg 413, *ibid*

<sup>57</sup> Pg 414, *ibid*

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-balfour-declaration>

and believed fully in its divinity. To (him), instead of sounding like preposterous nonsense about the Jews returning to Zion after a 2,000-year absence, it sounded like fulfillment of prophecy.”<sup>59</sup>

His declaration in 1917 AD was as instrumental to the return of the Jews as Persian king Cyrus’ declaration in 539 BC that “whoever there is among you of all His people, may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!” (2 Chr 36:23). Just as Isaiah declared of Cyrus -- “He is (the LORD’s) shepherd! And he will perform all My desire...” He declares of Jerusalem, “She will be built,” and of the temple, “Your foundation will be laid,”” – so perhaps Lord Balfour was chosen by God to “perform (His) desire” by canceling the Ottoman ban and opening the doors for the Jews’ return in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, almost 2,000 years after their scattering among the nations. In his heart, perhaps Balfour believed he had been chosen for such a time. According to the Balfour Project, a British foreign policy think tank, of today –

*“It is no exaggeration that the history of Israel/Palestine for the last hundred years has turned on the seminal Balfour Declaration of November 1917. Loved and loathed in equal measure, this was the letter that changed the future.”<sup>60</sup>*

According to Haaretz.com, it became “the engine that led to the State of Israel.”<sup>61</sup> The British Zionist Chiam Weizmann – the “brilliant” chemist who helped Britain develop advantageous synthetic explosives – upon the signing of the declaration, declared: “We hear the steps of the Messiah.”<sup>62</sup>

Following World War I, with the Turkish Ottoman Empire having been dismantled by the victorious Allies, the Arabs began to assert their influence over the “Palestinian desert.”<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately, the British had been making promises to them regarding territory in the region during the conflict in exchange for their cooperation against the Turks. The Arabs now expected Palestine to be part of that deal. As Jews began to build cities and factories, the Arab leaders were making a secret alliance with Hitler. The British expected the Jews and Arabs to simply weaken each other, leaving them in solid control of the region.<sup>64</sup> But that did not happen.

Violence flared, and the British were caught in the middle. To solve it, they hastily came up with the White Paper of 1939, which would limit Jewish immigration to 15,000 a year for five years, and then end all Jewish immigration to Palestine after that. The Jews were outraged. World War II would force everyone to choose sides with either the Allies or the Axis and fight in the greater conflict consuming the whole world. If the Nazis won, every last Jew on earth would be under threat of extermination. The Jews of Palestine chose to fight with the British.

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<sup>59</sup> Pg 415, Jews, God and History, Max I. Dimont, Mentor, copyright 1962

<sup>60</sup> <https://balfourproject.org/the-balfour-declaration/>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-britain-s-true-motivation-behind-the-balfour-declaration-1.5462518>

<sup>62</sup> Pg 415, Jews, God and History, Max I. Dimont, Mentor, copyright 1962

<sup>63</sup> Pg 408, ibid

<sup>64</sup> Pg 418, ibid

God uses earthly nations to perform his work of judgment on other nations, as he used the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires to judge Israel, and as he declared concerning the demise of the Babylonians: “Behold, I am going to arouse and bring up against Babylon a horde of great nations from the land of the north, and they will draw up their battle lines against her; from there she will be taken captive... How the hammer of the whole earth has been cut off and broken! How Babylon has become an object of horror among the nations! I set a snare for you, and you were caught, O Babylon, while you yourself were not aware; you have been found and also seized because you have engaged in conflict with the LORD.’ The LORD has opened His armory and has brought forth the weapons of His indignation, **FOR IT IS A WORK OF THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS** in the land of the Chaldeans,” Jer 50:9,23-25.

The victory over Nazi Germany in World War II by the Allies, led by the United States, would certainly qualify as a triumph of good over evil. God brought the hammer of American and Russian military might down on the nation that had attempted to exterminate the Jews, God’s chosen people in exile, from existence. It was the Work of His Hand to bring forth “the weapons of His indignation” so as to set his captives free.

But with that victory and the freedom, where were they to go? Back to the lands that had sold them out to ride the death trains to the concentration camps? Or to the land of Palestine, the home of their fathers, the land promised by God when he said, “You will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and ... place you on your own land,” (Ez 37:13,14). The Zionists opened the door and were encouraging them to return, just as Ezra the scribe had “gathered... men from (exiled) Israel to go (back) with (him),” (Ez 7:28). Many chose to seek a route to Zion.

While God uses men like Ezra, Nehemiah, Balfour and Wieszmann as instruments of his Work of Gathering, he declares it is His Work performed for his purposes: “Behold, I will gather them out of all lands to which I have driven them My anger, in My wrath, and in My great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. And they shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good, and for the good of their children after them,” Jer 32:37-39.

Just as it is not enough that the dry bones come together, grow muscles and skin, they need the breath of life in them, so they may live. God promises to do that: “And the breath came in to them, and they came to life, and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army,” Ez 37:10.

He also promises to make a covenant with them to never turn away from them again: “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me. And I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul. For thus says the LORD, ‘Just as I brought all this calamity on this people, so I am going to bring them all the good that I am promising them,’” Jer 32:40-44.

The victory over the German-led Axis freed the Jews from the concentration camps, and the Zionist Movement encouraged their return to the Land, *Eretz Israel*. The Jewish exiles risked imprisonment by setting sail for Israel on rickety ships, hoping to slip past the blockades of British warships. Many succeeded, but others were captured and found themselves once again behind barbed wire and under the guns in watchtowers on the prison island of Cyprus. Despite the blockade, over a hundred thousand Jews were smuggled into the country.

The British clamped down on the Jews, made mass arrests, and hung Jewish leaders<sup>65</sup>. The Jews fought back, fiercely retaliating against the British occupiers. By 1947, the British were ready to walk away: they ended the British Mandate, and handed the problem of Palestine over to the United Nations. The UN voted 33 to 13 to partition the region into an Arab state and a Jewish state. The Jews accepted the plan – the Arabs did not. May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1948 was the British evacuation day, and it was also the day the State of Israel was born, and it was an event declared in prophecy.

Max Dimont wrote of the day: “The State of Israel was officially born at 4:00 P.M., Friday, May 14, 1948, at the Tel Aviv Museum, where the Jews listened to Ben-Gurion proclaim the independence of the State of Israel. ‘By virtue of the natural and historic right of the Jewish people and of the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations, we hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine to be called Israel.’”<sup>66</sup>

Isaiah prophetically recounted the hypocrisy of the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, the judgment upon the Jewish leadership, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple: “He who burns incense is like the one who blesses an idol. As they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations, so I will choose their punishments, and I will bring on them what they dread. Because I called, but no one answered; I spoke, but they did not listen. And they did evil in My sight, and chose that in which I did not delight... But they will be put to shame. A voice of uproar from the city, a voice from the temple, the voice of the LORD who is rendering recompense to His enemies,” Is 66:3-6.

As is first found in Deuteronomy 30 – Moses’ warning of the blessing and the curse – the promise of restoration of Israel to the land immediately follows the warning of destruction and punishment for disobedience here in Isaiah 66: “Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once?” Is 66:7,8.

The answer is YES, and it will be God who delivers: “‘As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons. Shall I bring to the point of birth, and not give delivery?’ says the LORD. ‘Or shall I who gives delivery shut the womb?’ says your God. ‘Be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her, all you who love her; be exceedingly glad with her, all you

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<sup>65</sup> Pg 421, *Jews, God And History*, Max I. Dimont, Mentor, copyright 1962

<sup>66</sup> Pg 422, *ibid*

who mourn(ed) over her... Behold, I extend peace to her like a river. And the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream... As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem,” Is 66:8-13.

It is a Work of God that Israel has been gathered back to the Land of Promise this third time, here in our current time: “Then you shall see this, and your heart shall be glad, and your bones shall flourish like the new grass; AND THE HAND OF THE LORD SHALL BE MADE KNOWN TO HIS SERVANTS... They shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain offering to the LORD, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules, and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem... **For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I (shall) make will endure before Me,**’ declares the LORD, **‘So your offspring and your name will endure,’**” Is 66:14,20-23.

Did the Jews who established the new nation consider it to be of biblical significance? According to their written declaration, they did:

ERETZ-ISRAEL [(Hebrew) - the Land of Israel, Palestine] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom. [...]

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for **the Ingathering of the Exiles**; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; [and] it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel [...]

**WE APPEAL to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel.**

**PLACING OUR TRUST IN THE "ROCK OF ISRAEL", WE AFFIX OUR SIGNATURES TO THIS PROCLAMATION [...]**

The *Diaspora* was prophesied, as was the subsequent ingathering, by the prophet Ezekiel: “Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, your brothers, your relatives, your fellow exiles, and the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those to whom the [Gentile] inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, “Go far from the LORD; this land has been given us a possession.” Therefore say, “Thus say the Lord GOD, ‘Though I had removed them far away among the nations, and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone.’”

“Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “I shall gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I shall give you the land of Israel,”” Ezekiel 11:14-17.

God himself takes credit for the Work of Gathering Israel back to the Land: “Behold, **I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out.** As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, **so I will care for my sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered** on a cloudy and gloomy day. **And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land;** and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land... I will feed my flock and I will lead them to rest,’ declares the Lord GOD,” Ezekiel 34:11-15.

As God said through the prophet Isaiah, “Zion said, ‘The LORD has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me.’ Can a woman forget her nursing child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; you walls are continually before Me... Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations, and set up My standard to the peoples; and they will bring your sons in their bosom, and your daughters will be carried on their shoulders,” (Isaiah 49:14-16; 22).

“And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together,” Hosea 1:11.

*“When the LORD brought back the captive ones of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with joyful shouting; then they said among the nations, ‘The LORD has done great things for them.’ The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad! Restore our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the South. Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him,” Psalm 126*

## Six Works of God

### V. He Constructs (in the Building of the Earthly Temple)

*“Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it... Every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God,”* Psalm 127:1; Hebrews 3:4

The earthly Temple, the “house of the LORD” (Psalm 122:1), as it had been once situated on Mount Moriah (known today as “the Temple Mount”) in Jerusalem, was the permanent manifestation of the portable tabernacle God commanded Moses to construct as he led the children of Israel out of Egypt and back to the land of Canaan:

“Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution... And let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it... You shall erect the tabernacle according to its plan which you have been shown in the mountain,” Exodus 25:2,8,9; 26:30.

It was very important that the portable tabernacle, and subsequently the permanent Temple into which it was incorporated, be constructed “according to the pattern” that had been revealed to Moses, because, according to the writer of the letter to the Hebrews (most likely Paul), the tabernacle Moses erected was to be “**a copy and shadow of the heavenly things,**” (Heb 8:5). That is, Moses’ tabernacle was patterned after “**the sanctuary (in the heavens),... the true tabernacle, which the LORD pitched, not man,**” (Heb 8:2). This is why Moses “was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, ‘SEE,’ He says, ‘THAT YOU MAKE ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN,’” (Heb 8:5).

This sanctuary in heaven is the same one that David declared was the dwelling place of God himself: “**The LORD is in His holy temple,** (for) the LORD’s throne is in heaven,” Psalm 11:4. It was the tabernacle from where God hears David’s cry for help: “In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to My God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry for help before Him came into His ears,” Ps 18:6.

The writer of Hebrews reveals that because of the work of sacrifice performed by Jesus unto redemption by his shed blood, we believers in him “have confidence to enter the holy place [the true one in heaven] by [because of] the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,” (Heb 10:19,20). This entering and appearing before God in the heavenly holy place would be in a spiritual sense, rather than through an earthly, physical access, for believers in the manifest Christ are “being built up as a *spiritual* house for a holy priesthood, to offer up *spiritual* sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5).



So it is revealed here in Hebrews that the very purpose of the tabernacle in heaven is to act as a *spiritual* portal through which we even now residing in our physical realm may “draw near (to God) with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water,” (Heb 10:22). The **earthly tabernacle**, by contrasting purpose, is then to act as a “**symbol**” for “the present time” (Heb 9:9), that present time being the time during which we reside here on earth in our earthly bodies; it is a symbol, or better yet, a **model** that is a “**cop(y) of the (one) in heaven**,” (9:23), for the “holy place made with hands” – that is, the earthly temple – “**(is) a... copy of the true one... (in) heaven itself**,” (9:24). The earthly temple then is an object lesson here on earth to show us the workings of the true temple in heaven, with its earthly priests and services designed to reflect the pattern of the workings of the spiritual priesthood in the heavenly, spiritual tabernacle, as we “draw near to God” (Heb 7:19).

Just as we believers in Jesus are to “(have) our bodies washed with pure water” in a figurative sense so we may “draw near” to God spiritually in the heavenly tabernacle, so the priests of the earthly tabernacle were to come “to the doorway of the tent of meeting, and [literally] wash... with water” before entering (Exodus 29:4). As we are to have “our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience” before drawing near to the presence of God, so the priests, before entering the tent of meeting, were to literally “wash with water” at the “laver of bronze... that they may not die” (Ex 30:18-21).

The earthly temple is a “shadow of the good things to come” (Heb 10:1), which things came with the advent of Christ and his sacrifice. Just as we believers in the manifest Messiah are “A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION” (1 Peter 2:9) in the “SPIRITUAL house”, so Israel is a chosen people “**to whom belongs... the [earthly] temple service**” (Rom 9:4) and an *earthly* priesthood, so as to be the reflection, the model, the pattern, the symbol, the *copy* of the spiritual priesthood in heaven. As the earthly temple was presided over by a high priest, so the heavenly temple is presided over by a high priest, “Jesus..., (who has) become a high priest forever,” (Heb 6:20).

As there are similarities between the copy and the true, for the copy pictures the true, there are also contrasts between the two, for the very reason that one is physical and earthly, and the other is spiritual and heavenly: “The [earthly high] priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing, but (Christ), on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently,” Heb 8:23,24.

Furthermore, the earthly priesthood “was through the Levitical (lineage) according to the order of Aaron” (Heb 7:11), yet in contrast, “the Son of God... abides a priest perpetually” (7:3), and even though he “was descended from Judah” (7:14) in the flesh, he was ordained a high priest, “not on the basis of a law of physical requirement” (7:16), but “according to the order of Melchizedek” (6:20), which priesthood pre-existed even before Abraham, since “the King of Salem, which is the king of peace... (has) neither beginning of days nor end of life, but... abides a priest perpetually,” (7:2,3).

While each earthly high priest needed to “daily... offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people,” (Heb 7:27), Jesus the heavenly high priest, since he is perpetually “holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens,” (7:26), offered up only one sacrifice, “because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself,” (v 27). Whereas the Law of Moses “appoints men as high priests who are weak,” the “word of the oath (of the Lord)... appoints a Son (who was and is) perfect forever,” (v 28).

Since “the Law [including the temple sacrifices]... (is) only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, (it) can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which (the priests) offer continually, make perfect those who draw near; otherwise, (they would) have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year, for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins,” (Heb 10:1-4).

In contrast to those worshipers who engaged in the earthly temple sacrifices, “we (who have obtained eternal redemption through Christ the heavenly high priest [Heb 9:9-12]) have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all...**” (10:10). While “every [earthly] priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins, (Christ), having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,... **for by one offering He has perfected for all time** those who are sanctified,” (vs 11,12).

So what good was it for Israel to offer the earthly sacrifices at all? To do so was an act of faith, believing that God would bless them for that obedience, and faith “is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen, for by (faith) the men of old gained approval,” (Heb 11:1,2). And so “by faith (Moses) kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood,” (v 28), for “Moses was faithful in all (God’s) house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be (revealed) later, (just as) Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are” (Heb 3:5,6).

The contrasts between the earthly and the heavenly temples are obvious, but those do not nullify the value of the comparisons to be made between the true and the copy: “For since every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins, he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself. And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.

“**So also** Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, ‘Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee... Thou art a priest forever...’, (glorified Him in that saying),” Heb 5:1-6. And as the mortal high priest can empathize with the people, so does Christ, who “in the days of His flesh... offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death,

and He was heard because of His piety.... And having been made perfect, **He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,**" (vs 7-9).

So the value of the earthly temple and its sacrifices is to point to and remind us of **the true sacrifice**: "While the (first) tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time,... gifts and sacrifices are offered (even though they cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience),... (which) relate to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation. But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place [the one in heaven] once for all, having obtained eternal redemption," Heb 9:8-12.

"For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, 'THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU.' And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

"Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in heaven to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us," Heb 9:19-24.

Now the earthly temple is only given to Israel and the Levites, and it is to stand in the Land in the place the Lord has chosen for it. When Israel is exiled out of the land, God, as he told Solomon, will take "the house which (He has) consecrated for (His) name, (and) cast (it) out of (His) sight... And (it) will become a heap of ruins" (1 Kings 9:7,8). When Israel is exiled, the Temple is forsaken, for only to Israel was given "the Law and the temple service and the promises," (Rom 9:4). But when Israel is restored to the Land, the command of the Lord is to rebuild: "Thus says the LORD of hosts,... 'Go up to the mountain, bring wood and rebuild the Temple, that I may be... glorified,'" Hag 1:8.

Its purpose, when Israel is in the Land, is to declare the glory of the LORD to all the earth: "I will return to Jerusalem... My house will be built in it... And all the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," Zech 1:16; Mal 3:12.

"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.' Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that is built as a city that is compact together; to which the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD – an ordinance for Israel – to give thanks to the name of the LORD... Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; 'May they prosper who love you. May peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces.'...For the sake of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good," Psalm 122:1-9.

## **God Constructs an Earthly Temple...**

### **FIRST: The Tabernacle of Moses / The Temple of David & Solomon**

*“God is known in Judah; His name is great in Israel. And His tabernacle is in Salem, His dwelling place also is in Zion,”* Psalm 76:1,2

Make no mistake, the idea of constructing a tabernacle was not the invention of man, but was by the command of God himself: “Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle [*Lit., dwelling place*] of the tent of meeting. And you shall place the ark of the testimony there, and you shall **screen the ark with the veil**. And you shall bring in the table and arrange what belongs on it [the bread of presence]; and you shall bring in the lampstand and mount its lamps. Moreover, you shall set the gold altar of incense before the ark of the testimony [i.e., directly in front of the inner veil – *see Ex 30:6*], and **set up the [outer] veil for the doorway to the tabernacle,**” Exodus 40:1-5.

The tabernacle was comprised of these two compartments, the outer and the inner, as confirmed by the writer of Hebrews: “There was a tabernacle prepared, the **outer** [*Lit., first*] one, in which were the lampstand and the table (upon which is) the sacred bread; **this is called the holy place** [*Greek: Hagia*]. And **behind the second veil**, there was a tabernacle **which is called the Holy of Holies** [*Greek: Hagia Hagion*], having (before it [*Ex 30:6*]) a golden altar of incense and (within it) the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was... the tables of the covenant, and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the (place of) mercy [*NIV: atonement cover*],” Hebrews 9:2-5.

The priests of Levi **daily entered through the first veil into the holy place**, but **only the high priest was to enter through the second veil**, and that **only once a year**: “Now when these things have been thus prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle (through the first veil), performing the divine worship, but into the second (tabernacle) only the high priest enters, once a year, not without taking blood,” Hebrews 9:6,7. The blood was to be that of a “bull for a sin offering and a ram (male goat – *see Lev 16:9,15*) for a burnt offering,” (Lev 16:3).

The very first time the tabernacle was to be set up, it was to be on the first day of the first month. The one and only time each year the high priest, and only the high priest, no one else, was to enter the Holy of Holies was on the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur* (*Lit., “Day of Covering”*), “in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month... for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you” (Lev 16:29,30).

This Day of Covering is the sixth event of the seven “appointed times” (Lev 23) of the Jewish *religious* calendar year – three in the first month (*Nisan*, originally called *Abib* or *Aviv*) of the year: Passover (*Pesach*), Feast of Unleavened Bread (*Chag HaMatzot*), and First Fruits (all three celebrated during one eight day period); one in the third month (*Sivan*): Feast of Weeks (also called Pentacost or *Shavuot*); and the final three in the seventh month of *Tishri* (effectively *completing* the “appointed times”): Feast of Trumpets (*Yom Teruah*), Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), and finally the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*).

In the same way the daily ministry of the earthly priests in the outer tabernacle is a picture of the spiritual priesthood approaching and fellowshiping with God in the heavenly tabernacle, so it is suggested that the “appointed times” of the Jewish religious year are “yearly rehearsals, prophecies teaching the whole plan of God concerning the coming of the Messiah...”<sup>67</sup> This concept, generally accepted by evangelical premillennialists, is based on Colossians 2:16,17: “Let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a (Jewish) festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day – (for those) things... are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance (of those things) belongs to Christ.”

Certainly Passover, from the very first one executed in Egypt (Ex 12:27) to the ones observed by Jesus and the disciples in the Second Temple (Jn 2:13), is a picture of Christ’s own sacrifice, giving himself up as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29), just as Paul revealed to the Corinthians: “For Christ (is) our Passover (who) has been sacrificed” 1 Corinthians 5:7. For Christ “offer(ed) Himself... once... (having been) manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself... to bear the sins of many” (Heb 9:25-28).

Once a year the blood of the Passover lambs of all observant Jewish families was poured out at the base of the altar of burning in the Temple courtyard, and once only did Messiah “**offer() one sacrifice for sins for all time**” (Heb 10:12), for he has “released us from our sins by His blood” (Rev 1:5). And since “by one offering (Christ) has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Heb 10:14), there “no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (v 26). Just as all sanguine Hebrews in Egypt splattered the blood of the Passover lamb on the “two doorposts and on the lintel” of their houses (Ex 12:7) so that “when (the LORD saw) the blood (He would) pass over (them)” (v 13), so also we rely on the blood of the Lamb of God to “justif(y us... and) save() us from the wrath of God through Him” (Rom 5:9), believing “there is... now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1), whom “God... (sent)... as an offering for sin” (v 3).

As then the first Feasts of the spring picture Messiah’s first coming as the Lamb bearing Redemption through the sacrifice of himself, so the fall Feasts, including the Day of Atonement, most fittingly picture Messiah’s second coming as a King bringing Recompense. He comes first “gentle, mounted upon a donkey” (Mt 21:5), and he comes

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<sup>67</sup> Overview of the Seven Jewish Feasts, posted on [September 18, 2012](https://hiddeninjesus.wordpress.com/2012/09/18/overview-of-the-seven-jewish-feasts/) by [Jessica Renshaw](https://hiddeninjesus.wordpress.com/2012/09/18/overview-of-the-seven-jewish-feasts/);  
<https://hiddeninjesus.wordpress.com/2012/09/18/overview-of-the-seven-jewish-feasts/>

again “with great power and glory” (Mk 13:26). He comes first to “proclaim the favorable year of the LORD” (Lk 4:19); he comes second to “cast fire upon the earth” (Lk 12:49).

This view is expressed explicitly by Matthew Ervin at Apple Eye Ministries: “The Second Coming of Messiah fits the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement best. On this day the final remnant of the Jews will look upon Him whom they have pierced and weep bitterly (Zech. 12:10). The Jewish people will then come to experience true atonement by throwing themselves at the mercy of Jesus their Messiah. Finally, all of Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26).”<sup>68</sup> As bible commentator Jessica Renshaw observes: “(The) Fall feasts symbolize events still ahead. We live between the already and the not yet, between Messiah’s first coming as servant and His second coming as Lord of all.”<sup>69</sup>

## **Moses’ Tabernacle: Pre-Cursor to the First Temple**

The tabernacle was a portable structure, a tent designed to be carried, set up and taken down for transport as the children of Israel made their way back to Canaan. But God made clear that upon their arrival in the Promised Land, they were to come to him with their sacrifices and offerings at a permanent place that He would choose: “These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth... You shall seek the LORD **at the place which the LORD your God shall choose** from all your tribes, **to establish His name there for His dwelling**, and there you shall come. And there you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock,” Deut 12:1,5,6.

God repeated that edict, that as soon as they had established residence in the land of inheritance, they were to bring their offerings to the place God shall choose for his name: “You have not as yet come to the resting place and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you. When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and **He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security**, then it shall come about that the place in which the LORD your God shall choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you shall vow to the LORD,” Deut 12:9-11.

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<sup>68</sup> The Seven Feasts of Israel are Fulfilled in Jesus, March 7, 2014 by Matthew Ervin, <http://appleeye.org/2014/03/07/the-seven-feasts-of-israel-are-fulfilled-in-jesus/>

<sup>69</sup> Overview of the Seven Jewish Feasts, posted on September 18, 2012 by Jessica Renshaw; <https://hiddeninjesus.wordpress.com/2012/09/18/overview-of-the-seven-jewish-feasts/>

And then again, a third time, God repeats that they are only to offer the sacrifices **at the place he chooses**: “Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place you see, but in the place which the LORD chooses in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you... You are not allowed to eat within your gates the tithe... or any of your votive offerings which you vow, or your freewill offerings, or the contribution of your hand; but you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God will choose,” Deut 12:13-18.

When Israel is to sacrifice the Passover, after having arrived in the Land, it is to be “in the place where the LORD chooses to establish His name... (They) are not allowed to sacrifice the Passover in any of (their) towns which the LORD (their) God is giving (them), but at the place where the LORD (their) God chooses to establish His name,” Deut 16:2,5,6).

## **Moses’ Tabernacle Defiled by The Philistines**

Following Moses’ death, the children of Israel crossed the Jordan, and Joshua led them on a campaign to conquer the land. The Book of Joshua recounts the battles, and culminates with the defeat of all the indigenous people and kingdoms and the entire land being apportioned to all the twelve tribes of Israel: “So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And **the LORD gave them rest on every side**, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass,” Joshua 21:44,45.

Now God had declared to Israel through Moses, that after “**He gives (them) rest from all (their) enemies around (them) so that (they) live in security**” (Deut 12:10), they were to “**seek the LORD at the place which the LORD (their) God shall choose** from all (their) tribes, **to establish His name there for His dwelling**” (v 5). In hindsight, we know that God chose Jerusalem, and specifically Mount Moriah, to be that place, and yet despite God having fulfilled the promise to give them rest in the land, we read that “the whole congregation of the sons of Israel assembled themselves at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there” (Josh 18:1), even though the king of Jerusalem had been conquered (Josh 12:10) and the area around it given to the tribe of Judah (Josh 15:1,8). They were to *seek* the LORD at the place He would choose after He had given them rest – did they?

They certainly knew how to seek the will of the LORD in other regards, for we read that, during the height of the campaigns, the sons of Israel had “inquired of the LORD, saying, ‘Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?’” (Judges 1:1). The Lord so answered: “Judah shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand” (v 2). And subsequently Judah went up and defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites (v 4), and as part of that campaign had “fought against Jerusalem and captured it,” (v 8).

Yet the tent of meeting remained at Shiloh (Judges 18:31). There is no record that the children of Israel, now secure in the land, ever made an inquiry of the Lord as to where the place was that God would choose to “establish His name” so they may bring their burnt offerings to that place – “the place which the LORD your God will choose” – and no other.

Even though God had fulfilled all his promises to them, as soon as Joshua died, the “sons of Israel (began doing) evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals, and... forsook the lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt... Thus they provoked the LORD to anger” (Judges 2:11,12). As a result God “gave them into the hands of plunderers... and sold them into the hands of their enemies” (v 14). God then raised up judges to “deliver” them (v 16), but “when the judge died,... they would turn back and act more corruptly” (v 19). The Book of Judges recounts the sequence of judges over Israel; all the while “the temple of the LORD” remained in Shiloh (1 Samuel 1:9). God then raised a prophet-priest, Samuel, and “all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD” (1 Sam 3:20).

It was during the time of Samuel that Israel went to war with the Philistines and was defeated in an initial engagement. The elders of Israel then had the bright idea to take the ark of the covenant from the tabernacle at Shiloh into the war camp, thinking doing so would help them win the next battle. Yet just the opposite occurred -- Israel was defeated, and in fact, “the slaughter was very great... and the ark of God was (captured)” and the two sons of Eli the High Priest were killed (1 Sam 4:10, 11). Eli, upon hearing the news, fell backwards and died.

Now Eli’s daughter-in-law was pregnant and “about to give birth; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was taken and that her father-in-law and her husband had died, she knelt down and gave birth... And she called the boy Ichabod, saying, ‘The glory has departed from Israel’” (vs 19,21).

The Philistines, meanwhile, carried the ark to Ashdod, and set it up in the temple of Dagon. In response, God knocked down the idol of Dagon and “ravaged (the Ashdodites) and smote them with tumors” (1 Sam 5:1-6). When they carried it to Gath, he did the same to the people there (vs 8,9). When they tried to send it to Ekron, those people cried out, “They have brought the ark of the God of Israel around to us, to kill us and our people” (v 10). So they put it on a cart hitched to two nursing cows, and shut up their calves at home, to see which way the cows would take the cart (v 7). The cows pulled the cart directly to Bethshemesh, a city of the Israelites. By this the Philistines knew it was by the hand of the LORD they had been struck by the plagues.

The men of Bethshemesh, however, “looked into the ark of the LORD”, and so God “struck down all of the people” who had done so, “50,070 men, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter” (1 Sam 6:19). So they begged the men of Kiriath-jearim to come take the ark, and they did, and it remained there for twenty years, under the care of Eleazar, a son of Abinadab, who was consecrated to “keep the ark of the LORD” (1 Sam 7:1,2).



Now it may seem strange to some that merely looking inside the ark, or being possessed by non-Israelites, would result in death and plague, when it is thought by them that the ark is representative of God's mercy through the blood of His Son being figuratively (and some surmise literally<sup>70</sup>) sprinkled over the "Mercy Seat" upon it:

*Since [Christ's] blood has been sprinkled once for all on the heavenly mercy seat, as it were, we are now "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..." Romans 3:24)*<sup>71</sup>. – Henry M. Morris PhD

However, when viewed from the perspective that the ark of the covenant, and the Day of Atonement during which it is splattered with the blood of a bull and a goat *by* the High Priest, is actually symbolizing the Day of Wrath during the tribulation, when the wicked are killed in vengeance *by* the Anointed One, it is much more understandable that transgressing that type would result in death: in violating the explicit edict that no one besides the High Priest is to approach the ark, "the stranger who comes near shall be put to death" (Num 18:7).

This emphasizes the point that the types in Scripture need to be recognized and understood, and furthermore, respected. Moses found this out after he struck the Rock a second time, violating God's instructions. David discovered God wasn't kidding around when he saw Uzzah struck dead for reaching out to steady the ark when it was being moved out of the house of Abinadab on an ox cart (2 Samuel 6:6-8). In fact, "David was afraid of the LORD that day" (v 9). He could not be expected to understand the true meaning of the type from his vantage point, but he, and the priests, were being woefully ignorant of the clear Mosaic commandment regarding the ark of the covenant: "When the camp is to set out,... the sons of Kohath shall come to carry (the most holy things), so that they may not touch the holy objects and die," Numbers 4:4,15. As R.C. Sproul commented, "Uzzah was executed by the wrath of God..."<sup>72</sup>

When David became king over all Israel (2 Sam 5:1-4) following "a long (civil) war" (2 Sam 3:1) with the followers of Ish-bosheth, son of Saul, he "went to Jerusalem (and) captured the stronghold of Zion, that is the city of David" and lived there (2 Sam 5:6-9). Having consolidated his rule, he then decided to "bring up from (Baale-judah) the ark of God which is called by the Name, the very name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned above the cherubim" (2 Sam 6:2). This is when he had the ark placed on a cart, and when Uzzah was killed reaching out to steady it during transport. So David, now angry with God, parked it at Obed-edom the Gittite's house.

But God chose to bless Obed-edom, and when David heard that news, he decided to go ahead and bring the ark to the City of David, where he erected a sanctuary tent for it. "And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD," 2 Samuel 6:17.

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<sup>70</sup> <https://anchorstone.com/christ-s-blood-on-the-mercy-seat-what-does-it-mean/>

<sup>71</sup> The Mercy Seat, Henry M. Morris PhD, <https://www.icr.org/article/9730>

<sup>72</sup> A Consuming Fire: Holiness, Wrath, and Justice, R.C. Sproul, <https://www.monergism.com/>"-consuming-fire"-holiness-wrath-and-justice

## Building the First Temple

It must be recognized that “the City of David”, where David now placed the ark of the covenant, did not include the mountaintop that would come to be known as Mount Moriah (2 Chron 3:1), the location of the Holy Jewish Temple. It is true that the City of David, or *Zion*, was located just south of that hill, but the spot upon which the Temple was to eventually be set was a threshing floor owned by Araunah the Jebusite (*Ornan* in 1 Chronicles).

It must also be noticed that, while David now possessed the ark, and had built a “tent” for it to be housed in, the original tabernacle, the curtained tents that had been carried across the Jordan, remained a distance away to the northwest, in the city Gibeon: “David built houses for himself in the city of David; and he prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched a tent for it... And they brought in the ark of God and placed it inside the tent which David had pitched for it, and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God... And he appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the LORD... (But) he left Zadok the priest and his relatives the priests before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place which was at Gibeon, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering continually... according to all that is written in the law of the LORD, which He commanded Israel,” 1 Chronicles 15:1; 16:1,4,39,40.

While this passage paints an image suggesting “all that is written in the law of the LORD” was being followed, there is a stupendously glaring discrepancy: the ark of the covenant, and the tabernacle of Moses within which it was to be housed, were separated! The burnt offerings were being conducted at Gibeon, while some other burnt offerings were being conducted “before the ark of the covenant of the LORD” (1 Chron 16:37), along with a blowing of “trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God” (vs 6). None of this was “according to all that is written in the law of the LORD”!

The Law of the Tabernacle as given to Moses on Mt Sinai was very clear: “See that you make (every article in the tabernacle) after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain,” Exodus 25:40. Israel was to “construct a sanctuary for (God), that (He) may dwell among them; according to all that (He was) going to show (Moses), as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so (Israel was to) construct it” (Ex 25:9). And within that tabernacle was to be “a veil of blue and purple and scarlet... (hanging) under the clasps, and (Israel was to) bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil; and the veil (was to) serve for (Israel) as a partition between the holy place and the holy of holies,” (Ex 26:31-34).

There was no provision in the Law for the ark of the covenant to be housed in its own separate “tent” while the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, containing the altar of burning and presumably all the other articles to be made according to the pattern shown to Moses, resided 5 miles away in an entirely different city.

It is no wonder then, that “the anger of the LORD burned against Israel (so that) it incited David against them to say, ‘Go, number Israel and Judah’” (2 Sam 24:1). Why was this of any consequence? Because the Law of Moses only allowed a census on the condition that each person paid a ransom for his soul of half a shekel, which “atonement” money was to then be given explicitly for the service of the tabernacle: “The LORD... spoke to Moses, saying, ‘(If) you take a census of the sons of Israel to number them, then each one of them shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them. This is what everyone who is numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary..., half a shekel as a contribution to the LORD... And you shall take the atonement money from the sons of Israel, and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may be a memorial for the sons of Israel before the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves,” Ex 30:11-16.

There were two problems here: 1) the account of the taking of the census in 2 Samuel 24 does not indicate that David collected the required half shekel from each person, which oversight would be a direct violation of the Law of Moses, and, 2) there were two “tents of meeting”, one in Gibeon and one in the City of David. Which one was the legitimate “tent of meeting” to which the atonement money must be given?

But there was an even bigger issue at play – the thrice declared order of God to Moses: “Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place you see, but (only) **in the place which the LORD chooses** in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you... you shall eat (your offerings) before the LORD your **God in the place which the LORD your God will choose,**” Deut 12:13-18. Hindsight shows us that “place” was the threshing floor of Araunah, not in David’s city, and not in Shiloh, Nob or Gibeon.

Further, the Law made clear they were to “seek the LORD” – inquire of him -- as to where that place was to be: “These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth... **You shall seek the LORD at the place which the LORD your God shall choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come...** You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes,” Deut 12:1,5,8.

Yet here was David, doing whatever he thought was right “in his own eyes.” Even after God had “given him rest on every side from all his enemies,” 2 Sam 7:1. That was the cue to seek the LORD as to where His place was to be: “When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and **He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security,** then it shall come about that the place in which the LORD your God shall choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to the LORD,” Deut 12:10,11. David had been given that rest, but did not seek.

Here is what David did do: “Now it came about when... the LORD had given (the king) rest on every side from all his enemies” (2 Sam 7:1), that David got the notion it was time to build a permanent building to house the ark of the LORD: “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains,” 2 Samuel 7:2. Not a place to build a permanent tabernacle according to all that had been commanded, but a fancy building within which to simply enshrine the ark!

But in order for God to punish David for his oversight, and encourage him to seek him for the place of his choosing, God had to entice him to violate a direct and explicit Law of Moses – the census taking without the atonement money. Without that half shekel, God could bring the plague. So God called up the Accuser of the Saints, Satan himself, to entice the violation: “Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel” 1 Chron 21:1. So David gave the order, “Go, number Israel,” (v 2).

God was now justified in bringing a plague, with the end game forcing David to seek him. God told the prophet Gad to tell David to pick his plague: “So Gad came to David and said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Take for yourself either three years of famine, or three months to be swept away before your foes,... or else three days of the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence in the land,... all the territory of Israel”” 1 Chron 21:11,12. David chose the pestilence, and “70,000 men of Israel fell,” (v 14).

The impetus of God’s anger, the oversight of David, and the path of pestilence converged on the place of God’s choosing, the threshing floor of Auranah: “God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but... said to the destroying angel, ‘It is enough; now relax your hand.’ And the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan (Araunah) the Jebusite” 1 Chron 21:15.

David finally seeks the LORD: “I am the one who has sinned and done very wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done? O LORD my God, please let Thy hand be against me and my father’s household, but not against Thy people that they should be plagued,” 1 Chron 21:17. In response to David’s plea, “the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. So David went up” (v 18).

Ornan and his four sons, threshing wheat at the threshing floor, witnessed the angel “standing between earth and heaven with his drawn sword in his hand” (1 Chron 21:16) and were very alarmed. When David showed up, Ornan “prostrated himself before David” (v 21). David said to Ornan, “Give me the site of this threshing floor, that I may build on it an altar to the LORD; for the full price... that the plague may be restrained from the people,” (v 22). Ornan agreed, David paid, and he built an altar and sacrificed, calling to the Lord. And God answered “with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering” (v 26). “And the LORD commanded the angel, and he put his sword back in its sheath” (v 27).

It finally registered: “Then David said, ‘This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel... The house that is to be built for the LORD shall be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all lands,” 1 Chron 22:1,5.

This very outcome of the transaction between David and Araunah was the subliminal message found in the names of the ten nations given to Abram in the covenant of the land: “The LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the **Kenite** and the **Kenizzite** and the **Kadmonite** and the **Hittite** and the **Perizzite** and the **Rephaim** and the **Amorite** and the **Canaanite** and the **Girgashite** and the **Jebusite,**” Genesis 15:18-21. Each tribe name has meaning originating from its root word, and those roots form the following message: “Strike quickly the hunter of old, the terror of the countryside, the giant boasting, and purchase, you who arrive from your pilgrimage, the threshing place of Jerusalem.”

Kenite - Sts 7017 *Kay-nee'* from 7014 *kah 'yin* the same as 7013 *kah 'yin* – **striking fast**; spear

Kenizzite - Sts 7074 *Ken-iz-zee'* from 7073 *Ken-az'* – to hunt; **hunter**

Kadmonite - Sts 6935 *Kad-mo-nee'* same as 6931 *kad-mo-nee'* – ancient, **(thing of) old**

Hittite - Sts 2850 *Khit-tee'* from 2845 *khayth* – **terror**

Perizzite - Sts 6522 *Per-iz-zee'* – **of the open country**

Rephaim - Sts 7497 *Raw-faw'* – **a giant** (see 1051 *Beyth Rapha* -- house of the giant)

Amorite - Sts 567 *Em-o-ree'* derived from 559 *aw-mar'* – **to say (including boast self)** -- in the sense of publicity, i.e., prominence

Canaanite - Sts 3669 *Ken-ah-an-ee'* from 3667 *ken-ah'-an* – trader, merchant, traffick (Noah Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language 1828 KJV, Traffick 1. Trade; commerce, either **by barter or by buying and selling.**)

Girgashite - Sts 1622 *Ghir-gaw-shee'* of uncertain der.; Hitchcock's Bible Names Dictionary – **who arrive from pilgrimage**

Jebusite - Sts 2983 *Yeb-oo-see'* from 2982 *yeb-oos'* -- trodden, i.e., **threshing-place**; BDB **Jebus, name of Jerusalem**; 1 Chron 11:4 (NAS) “Then David and all Israel went to Jerusalem (that is, Jebus); and the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, were there.”

The children of Israel arrived from their pilgrimage to take possession of the land promised to Abraham's descendants. Then David slew the giants, the *Raphaim*, beginning with Goliath, who “taunted the armies of the living God” (1 Sam 17:36), and ending with the four sons of the “giant” of Gath (2 Sam 21:15-22), thus bringing peace and rest “from... all his enemies” (22:1). And though it took a plague to motivate him, he finally purchased the threshing floor of the Jebusite, thus fulfilling the exhortation of the prophetic message found in the covenant of Abraham.

When David proposed building a “house of cedar” to enshrine the ark of the covenant, the idea had been immediately rebuffed by God through Nathan the prophet: “Thus says the LORD, ‘Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day... Did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel,... saying, “Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?”’” 2 Samuel 7:5-7.

God does, however, take the opportunity to make a covenant with David, which included a promise that he would “raise up (his) descendant after (him), who will come forth from (him), and (God Himself) will establish his kingdom,” (2 Sam 7:12). This promised descendant of David is the one who would build the house: “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever,” v 13.

This promised son of David would have a very special relationship with God: “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me,” 2 Sam 7:14. Yet God, his Father, would strike him: “When he (is bent down by)<sup>73</sup> iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul... And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever,” 2 Sam 7:14-16.

David recognized this was prophetic of a distant future fulfillment: “Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me this far?... For Thou has spoken also of the house of Thy servant concerning the **distant future**... For Thou, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, hast made a revelation to Thy servant, saying, ‘I will build you a house,’” 2 Sam 7:18,19,27. The promise was, of course, referring explicitly to the Son of David, Jesus the Messiah, to be born in the distant future.

Jesus, a direct descendant of David (Luke 3:23-31) through Mary, literally fulfilled the father/son relationship between himself and God: “A voice (came) out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; hear Him!’” Matt 17:5. He also literally fulfilled the prophecy of the scourging by the “sons of men”: “Then Pilate... took Jesus and scourged Him,” John 19:1.

He was weighed down by iniquity, not committed by himself, but by the iniquity of the world, according to the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah: “Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows he carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our wellbeing fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed... The LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him,” Is 53:3-6.

There is an element of biblical prophecy in which the true, distant fulfillment is reflected in an immediate, yet not quite complete, manifestation. For example, in Isaiah 7, the LORD gave a prophecy through Isaiah to King Ahaz of Judah, that a sign would be given to him to confirm the promise that the king of Syria and the king of Israel, who were coming to wage war against his kingdom, would not be successful: “The Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken,” Is 7:14-16.

Isaiah then “approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the LORD said to (him), ‘Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz (*Swift is the booty,*

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<sup>73</sup> Strong’s 5753 *avah* – to crook, be bent, bowed down, distorted

*speedy is the prey*); for before the boy knows how to cry out “My father” or “My mother,” the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria,” (Is 8:3,4). This birth of Isaiah’s son was the sign to Ahaz that the promise of victory by Syria and Israel over Judah “shall (not) come to pass” (Is 7:7).

But obviously the prophecy, while having an immediate, partial fulfillment in the birth of Isaiah’s son, was not speaking only of that birth, but was a prophecy of a much greater fulfillment, the birth of the Messiah, the son of David, whose very name would be “God is with us”: “An angel of the Lord appeared to (Joseph) in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus (*Jehovah saves*), for it is He who will save His people from their sins.’ Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, ‘BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY CALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,’ which translated means, ‘GOD WITH US,’” Matt 1:20-23.

The same kind of immediate, partial fulfillment while still looking toward a future, complete fulfillment, is found in the covenant God made with David that he would have a son who would “build a house for (the LORD’s) name” (2 Sam 7:13). Solomon believed he himself was that promised son: “The LORD my God has given me rest on every side... And behold, I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke to David my father, saying, ‘Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he will build the house for My name,’” 1 Kings 5:4,5.

Solomon did build a house for the LORD’s name, the First Temple, but he fell far short of fulfilling completely the promises of the prophecy, including that God would “establish the throne of his kingdom forever” so that “(his) house and (his) kingdom shall endure before Me forever; (his) throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam 7:13). On the contrary, God only gave Solomon a *conditional promise*: “IF you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, THEN I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel,’” 1 Kings 9:4-5.

But with that promise came the alternative, should he not meet the conditions: “BUT IF you or your sons shall indeed turn away from following Me, and shall not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you and shall go and serve other gods and worship them, THEN I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight,” 1 Kings 9:6-8. David had warned him: “(God) will establish (your) kingdom forever, IF...” (1 Chronicles 28:7).

Predictably, we read that “when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods” (1 Kings 11:4). So the Lord said to him, “Because you have... not kept My covenant,... I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant... I will (do this not to you, but to) your son,” (vs 11,13). Solomon’s throne would not endure forever; God’s lovingkindness would depart from him, just as it had from Saul.

That promise, that David would have a son whose kingdom would endure forever, was confirmed as a covenant by Jeremiah the Prophet:

“This says the LORD of hosts,... ‘(There will come a day when) I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth... For thus says the LORD, “David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel;...” And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, “If you can break My covenant for the day, and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then **My covenant may also be broken with David My servant that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne,**””” Jeremiah 33:12,15,17,19-21.

That promise is to be fulfilled in Jesus, the true Son of God, the flesh son of David through Mary, and the legally adopted son of David through Joseph. It is Jesus who fulfills completely the prophecy of Isaiah:

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. **There will be no end** to the increase of his government or of peace, **on the throne of David and over his kingdom**, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this,” Isaiah 9:6,7.

This prophecy of Isaiah is confirmed in Jesus by Gabriel’s message to Mary:

“Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you... for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and **the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end,**” Luke 1:28,30-33.

It is Jesus whose “throne shall be established forever”; it is Jesus from whom the “lovingkindness” of God shall never “depart... as (God) took it away from Saul”; it is Jesus who is bowed down by iniquity, corrected by God “with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men”; it is Jesus who is the “descendant... who will come forth from (David)”; and it is Jesus who “shall build a house” for the name of the LORD, according to the covenant promises God made to David, in 2 Samuel 7:8-17.

Every covenant God makes with man must, according to Hebrews 9, be inaugurated with the shedding of blood: “For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be (a) death... (For example,) even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood; for when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU,’” Hebrews 9:16-20.



Jesus himself was the blood sacrifice inaugurating the covenant of David that his promised son whose “throne of his kingdom” would be “established forever”, and in that blood letting and sprinkling, he was declared King over the house of Jacob:

“Pilate... summoned Jesus, and said to Him, ‘You are the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘It is as you say.’<sup>74</sup>... Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world...’ Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and arrayed Him in a purple robe; and they began to come up to Him, and say, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’... (Then) Pilate brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat... and he said to the Jews, ‘Behold, your King!’ They therefore cried out, ‘Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’... And so he then delivered Him up to them to be crucified... And Pilate wrote an inscription also, and put it on the cross. And it was written, ‘JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.’... And it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek. And so the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, ‘Do not write, “The King of the Jews”; but that He said, “I am King of the Jews.”’ Pilate answered, ‘What I have written I have written.’” (And) the soldiers... crucified Jesus” John 18:33-37; 19:1-3,13-23.

Just as Hebrews declares of his crucifixion, “the blood of Christ (shed on the cross)... (was an) offer(ing up of) Himself without blemish to God... For a covenant (of God is only) inaugurated (with) blood,” Heb 9:14,17,18. Jeremiah reveals the effective date of the covenant, the time when Jesus “will sit on His glorious throne” (Matt 25:31): “(After) the time of Jacob’s distress... it shall come about on that day... (that Israel) shall serve the LORD their God, and **David their king, whom I will raise up for them,**” Jer 30:7-9.

Jesus is the fulfillment of every detail of the promises of the covenant God made with David, and that includes building the house of the LORD. Long after Solomon had built the first temple, Zechariah prophesied that the promised Branch of David would be the one to build the temple of the Lord: “Take silver and gold, make an ornate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua (*Grk: Jesus*)... Then say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold, a man whose name is the Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and **He will build the temple of the LORD. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD,** and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne,”’” Zech 6:11-13.

Yet it must be acknowledged that the prophecies of Messiah may involve an immediate, partial fulfillment, and one of those was that a son of David would “build a house for My name.” That partial fulfillment of Solomon building the first temple was a type of the promised Son of David building the temple of God, and it was a work of God manifested over three events: the building of the temple over three iterations, as a sign of His Work.

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<sup>74</sup> Matthew 27:11

Solomon was therefore a Type of Messiah – his name meant “Peaceful”<sup>75</sup>, just as Jesus is known as the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). He was one of several individuals who pre-figured the coming Christ in some aspect, including Adam (Rom 5:14), the priest Melchizedek, king of Salem (i.e., “King of Peace”) (Heb 7:1-3), Isaac (Gen 22:2,8), King David (Ez 34:23,24; Jer 30:9), Joshua the Priest (Zech 6:11-15), and Jonah (Lk 11:30). As Solomon was a pre-figure of the promised Son of David, the temple he built to replace the curtained tabernacle was also a pre-figure of the temple Messiah would build in the kingdom. And all building of the temple is a Work of God, for as Solomon declared, “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it,” Psalm 127:1.

So in his role as a figure of Messiah, Solomon “decided to build a house for the name of the LORD” (2 Chron 2:1), just as his father David had desired to do, but had been forbidden by God, according to David’s account, from doing so (1 Chron 22:8; 28:3). But it is very important that the Type stay true to the pattern of the True thing it pictures. So he was warned by David: “Know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart... If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever,” 1 Chron 28:9. After having completed the temple, Solomon was also warned by God himself: “If you or your sons turns away from following Me,... then I will cut off Israel from the land... and (this) house... I will cast out of My sight,” 1 Kings 9:6,7.

In his zeal, David prepared a vast amount of construction materials, saying, ‘My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the LORD shall be exceedingly magnificent... Therefore I will make preparation for it’... Then he called for... Solomon, and charged him to build (the) house,” 1 Chron 22:2-6. The site was of God’s choosing: “Then Solomon began to build the house of the **LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah**, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared, **on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite**,” 2 Chron 3:1.

Solomon looked to Hiram, king of Tyre, to assist him in the building: “Then Solomon sent word to Hiram, saying, ‘You know that David my father was unable to build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the wars which surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet (see Heb 2:5-8). But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side,” 1 Kings 5:2-5. So Hiram sent cedars from Lebanon and skilled workers to assist Solomon, and he was “seven years in building it” (1 Kings 6:38).

David gave God credit for the Temple: “Then David gave to his son Solomon the plan of... the temple, (and all) its buildings (and rooms and articles)... ‘All this,’ said David, **‘the LORD made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, all the details of this pattern,’**” 1 Chron 28:11-19. As Architect, God is credited for the work: “All... we have provided to build Thee a house... is from Thy hand, and all is Thine,” 1 Chron 29:16.

The LORD on his part confirmed that this is the place of His dwelling: “I... have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice... I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually,” 2 Chron 7:12,16. God had chosen the place “to establish His name.”

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<sup>75</sup> notes, pg 411, New American Standard Bible, Collins World, Lockman Foundation 1975

## The Glory of the LORD fills the First Temple

As scripture recounts, “in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel,... he began to build the house of the LORD” (1 Kings 6:1). The temple walls were “built of stone... and (Solomon) covered the house with beams and planks of cedar” (v 9), and built “side chambers all around” (v 5). He also paneled “the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar, from the floor... to the ceiling... and he overlaid the floor of the house with boards of cypress” (v 15). The inner sanctuary, within which to “place... the ark of the covenant of the LORD”, was twenty cubits [30 ft]<sup>76</sup> in length, width and height and “overlaid... with pure gold” (I Kings 6:19,20). And so “in the fourth year (of Solomon’s reign) the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid,... and in the eleventh year,... the house was finished throughout all its parts and according to all its plans. So (Solomon) was seven years in building it” (1 Kings 6:37,38).

During construction, God’s conditional promise to Solomon was repeated: “The word of the LORD came to Solomon saying, ‘Concerning this house which you are building, if you will walk in My statutes and execute My ordinances and keep all My commandments by walking in them, then I will carry out My word with you which I spoke to David your father. And I will dwell among the sons of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel. So Solomon built the house and finished it,’” 1 Kings 6:11-14.

On the porch of the entryway into the sanctuary Solomon set up two pillars. The right one he named “Jachin”, which means “He shall establish”<sup>77</sup>, and the left one he named “Boaz”, which means “In His strength”<sup>78</sup> (1 Kings 7:21). The written Hebrew language, unlike English, is read, not left to right, but right to left; therefore, the meaning of the names of the pillars is this: “God shall establish (this house) in His own strength.” Not only is this a reference to Solomon’s own declaration in the Psalms, that “unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1), but it is also prophetic of the time when the promised Son of David, the “Branch”, shall “build the temple of the LORD; yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD,” Zech 6:12.

Now when “all the work that King Solomon performed in the house of the LORD was finished” (1 Kings 7:51), and he had “brought all the things dedicated by his father David” into the treasuries (v 51), then “Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes,... to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the city of David, which is in Zion,... in... the seventh month... Then the priests brought (it)... to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim... And it came about **when the priests came from the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house,**” (1 Kings 8:1-11).

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<sup>76</sup> Amplified Bible, <https://www.studydrive.org/bible/eng/erv/1-kings/6-2.html>

<sup>77</sup> footnote on 1 Kings 7:21, pg 335, New American Standard Bible, copyright 1975 Lockman Foundation

<sup>78</sup> *ibid*

This filling of the temple with a cloud, the “glory of the LORD”, established that the temple of David and Solomon was the divine continuation of the tabernacle erected by Moses, for after Moses had “finished the work” of setting up “the tabernacle of the tent of meeting” (Exodus 40:2) for the first time, “then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle,” (vs 34,35).

This was the same cloud that led them out of Egypt: “Then (the sons of Israel) set out from Succoth... and the LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night” Exodus 13:20,21. It was the “thick cloud” that covered Mt Sinai as “the LORD descended upon it in fire” to deliver the Law to Moses (Ex 19:16-18).

After the tabernacle was constructed and the cloud covered the tent, “throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out” (Ex 40:36), and whenever “the ark set out... Moses (would shout), ‘Rise up, O LORD! And let Thine enemies be scattered, and let those who hate Thee flee before Thee’” (Num 10:35).

One is reminded by Moses’ invocation of the vision of the ark appearing in John’s Revelation: “The nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came... to destroy those who destroy the earth. And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple... And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues (of the wrath of God)... were finished” Rev 11:18,19; 15:7,8. As the LORD said to David’s Lord: “Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet... He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath” Psalm 110:1,5.

So as the cloud filled the First Temple at its dedication, Solomon addressed the people assembled: “The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud. I have surely built Thee a lofty house, a place for Thy dwelling forever” 1 Kings 8:12,13. He then blessed the assembly of Israel, and prayed: “O LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like Thee in heaven above or on earth beneath, who art keeping covenant and showing lovingkindness to Thy servants who walk before Thee with all their heart, who hast kept with Thy servant, my father David, that which Thou hast promised him; indeed, Thou hast spoken with Thy mouth and hast fulfilled it with Thy hand as it is this day... But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built! Yet have regard to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Thy servant prays before Thee today; that Thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which Thou hast said, ‘My name shall be there’” 1 Kings 8:23,24,27-29.

Solomon then blessed the people: “Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant” 1 Kings 8:56.

## The First Temple Destroyed By The Babylonians

Following the dedication of the Temple, God warned Solomon a second time to be careful to “do() according to all that I have commanded”: “I have heard your supplication, which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built by putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. And as for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked,... then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’ But if you or your sons shall indeed turn away from following Me, and shall not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you and shall go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight... And this house will become a heap of ruins; everyone who passes by will be astonished and hiss and say, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?’ And they will say, ‘Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and adopted other gods and worshiped them” 1 Kings 9:3-9.

For most of his life Solomon followed the commandments, “three times... a year offer(ing)... on the altar which he built to the LORD” (1 Kings 9:25), and God blessed him, so that he “became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom” (1 Kings 10:23). But he “loved many foreign women” (1 Kings 11:1), and as he grew old, “his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been” (v 4).

So the LORD “was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD,... who had appeared to him twice” (1 Kings 11:9). The kingdom would be torn in two, with ten tribes to be given to his servant, Jeroboam, and one tribe, Judah, given to Solomon’s son Rehoboam. But both kings would do evil in the sight of the Lord, and lead the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah into idolatry and wickedness.

Prophet Ahijah warned Jeroboam of the coming fate of Israel: “The LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the Euphrates River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger” 1 Kings 14:15. Following a succession of kings, each more wicked than the previous, God finally ended the kingdom of Israel, as the ten tribes were captured and exiled by the Assyrians.

The kingdom of Judah alternated between good kings and wicked kings, but eventually it too would succumb to idolatry and disobedience, so that God would judge them by exile to Babylon for seventy years. And so King Nebuchadnezzar “burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its fortified buildings with fire, and destroyed all its valuable articles. And those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah” (2 Chron 36:19,20).

But God did not bring the judgment of destruction upon the Temple without warning. Besides his initial admonition to Solomon at the dedication, he sent prophets to both the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah, calling for repentance.

Jeremiah was a priest and prophet in the days of the kings of Judah, Josiah, his son Jehoiakim (aka Jehoiachin) and Jehoiakim's brother Zedekiah, just prior to the final exile to Babylon. Jeremiah declared the words of the LORD: "Behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north... and they will set each one his throne at the entrance gates of Jerusalem, and against all its walls round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will pronounce My judgments on them concerning all their wickedness, whereby they have forsaken Me and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands," Jer 1:15,16.

Jeremiah called on them to repent: "Thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, '...Circumcise yourselves to the LORD and remove the foreskins of your heart... Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem, that you may be saved'" Jer 4:4,14. But they had hardened their hearts, so the destruction was inevitable: "The whole land shall be a desolation (yet I will not execute a complete destruction)... I will not change My mind, nor will I turn from it... Roam to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem... If you can find a man, if there is one who does justice, who seeks truth, then I will pardon her... But they refuse to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent," Jer 4:27,28; 5:1-3.

God sent him to the Temple: "Stand in the gate of the LORD's house and proclaim there this word, and say, 'Here the word of the LORD, all you of Judah, who enter by these gates to worship the LORD!... Amend your ways... and I will let you dwell in this place... (But) will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal,... then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, "We are delivered!" – that you may (continue to) do all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen it... I called you but you did not answer, therefore, I will do to the house which is called by My name... as I did to Shiloh,'" Jer 7:1-14.

While the coming judgment is determined, the promise of restoration, because of God's unconditional promise made to Abraham, is also certain: "I have forsaken My house, I have abandoned My inheritance... Behold I am about to uproot... the house of Judah from (the land). (But) it will come about that after I have uprooted them, I will again have compassion on them; and I will bring them back, each one to his inheritance and each one to his land," Jer 12:7,14,15.

God then gave Jeremiah a sign of his promise: "The LORD showed me: behold, two baskets of figs set before the temple of the LORD! One basket had very good figs,... and the other... had very bad figs, which could not be eaten... Then the word of the LORD came to me..., 'Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the captives of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans. For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land... And I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people,'" Jer 24:1-7.

## **God Constructs an Earthly Temple...**

### **SECOND: The Temple of Zerubbabel / Herod**

*“Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?... Go up to the mountain, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,” Haggai 1:4, 8*

As recounted in the earlier section **God Collects Israel: SECOND Out of Babylon** (pg 78), the people of the land of Judah remained locked in exile in the land of Chaldea until the fall of the Babylonian Empire to Cyrus the Persian, for a length of time foretold in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah. It was during this exile that the people came to be called “the Jews” (Ezra 4:12; Esther 3:6), having been captured from and exiled out of the Nation of *Judah*, whose capital was the city of Jerusalem.

One of the very first official decrees of Cyrus upon establishing Persian rule over Babylonia was to free the Jews to return to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the Jewish Temple:

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia – in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah – the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, ‘Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, “The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and **He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem**, which is in Judah... Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and **rebuild the house of the LORD**, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. And every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering **for the house of God which is in Jerusalem**,” 2 Chron 36:22,23; Ezra 1:3,4.

It was God himself who “stirred up the spirit of Cyrus” to send out the edict to rebuild the temple, and Cyrus himself who recognized that it was God who “appointed (him) to build Him a house in Jerusalem.” Just as God had performed His Work of constructing the original wilderness tabernacle by directing Moses to follow the pattern shown to him, and by divinely revealing plans to David and Solomon for the permanent temple, so God was performing His Work of building the Second Temple by inspiring the Persian king Cyrus to command the Jews to return and build.

It is quite possible that Cyrus had access to the prophecy of Isaiah through Daniel, a high-ranking official in his court: “So... Daniel enjoyed success in the reign... of Cyrus the Persian,” (Dan 6:28). Isaiah’s prophecy declared Cyrus by name as the one who would enable the restoration of the temple:

“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me. And who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; yes let him recount it to Me in order, from the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming and the events that are going to take place... And you are My witnesses... It is I who says of Jerusalem, “She shall be inhabited!” And of the cities of Judah, “They shall be built.” And I will raise up her ruins again... **It is I who says of Cyrus, “He is my shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.” And he declares of Jerusalem, “She will be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Your foundation will be laid,”**” Is 44:6-8,26-28.

It might have been tempting to dismiss the name in that portion of the prophecy as mere coincidence, or to assign the name to some other “Cyrus,” until the prophecy gets more explicit in identifying who this particular “Cyrus” is:

“Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed, Whom I have taken by the right hand, to **subdue nations before him**, and to **loose the loins of kings**; to **open doors before him so that gates will not be shut**: ‘I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will **shatter the doors of bronze**, and **cut through their iron bars**. And I will **give you the treasures of darkness, and hidden wealth of secret places**, in order that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. For the sake of Jacob My servant, and Israel My chosen one, I have called you by your name; I have **given you a title of honor** though you have not known Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these,” Is 45:1-7.

Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered many nations, including Media, Assyria, and Lydia, and was the first king to be known as “The Great.”<sup>79</sup> Among his final conquests was the Babylonian empire, whose capital city Babylon was taken over in one night, after Cyrus had diverted the waters of the Euphrates into canals and into the great swamp basin Babylonian Queen Nitocris had built<sup>80</sup>. This lowered the river level and made it possible

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<sup>79</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_people\\_known\\_as\\_%22the\\_Great%22](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_known_as_%22the_Great%22)

<sup>80</sup> <https://flaneursarcade.wordpress.com/2015/01/25/babylonian-and-egyptian-nitocris/>



for his soldiers to enter the city through the riverbed that passed under the city walls, thus avoiding having to attempt a breach of the fortified gates.

As historian Herodotus describes, all the street gates along the walls of the river channel running through the city had been left open, since it had not occurred to the Babylonians that such a unique invasion maneuver would be attempted:

*[Cyrus] turned the Euphrates by a canal into the basin, which was then a marsh, on which the river sank to such an extent that the natural bed of the stream became fordable. Hereupon the Persians who had been left for the purpose at Babylon by the river-side, entered the stream, which had now sunk so as to reach about midway up a man's thigh, and thus got into the town. Had the Babylonians been apprised of what Cyrus was about, or had they noticed their danger, they would never have allowed the Persians to enter the city, but would have destroyed them utterly; for **they would have made fast all the street gates which gave access to the river**, and mounting upon the walls along both sides of the stream, would so have caught the enemy, as it were, in a trap. But, as it was, the Persians came upon them by surprise and so took the city. Owing to the vast size of the place, the inhabitants of the central parts (as the residents at Babylon declare) long after the outer portions of the town were taken, knew nothing of what had chanced, but as they were engaged in a festival, continued dancing and reveling until they learnt about the capture. Such, then, were the circumstances of the first taking of Babylon.<sup>81</sup>*

The “festival” in which the city was engaged was the occasion of that very same “great feast” King Belshazzar was conducting for “a thousand of his nobles,” described in Daniel 5:1. It was quite possibly the spring festival of *Akitu* – a twelve-day feast celebrating the sowing of the barley during which petitions would be made to the god Marduk – since “all the people in the city would celebrate (it), including the...(upper class),...(middle class),...(lower class), High Priest, and the King.”<sup>82</sup>

Upon entering the city through the now-accessible river passage and open river channel street gates, the Persian soldiers under the command of Gobryas<sup>83</sup> encountered little resistance, as described in the following account by Xenophon, a Greek historian, in his *Cyropedia, The Institution of Cyrus*:

*Thereupon [the soldiers of Gobryas' detachment] entered; and of those they met some were struck down and slain, and others fled into their houses, and some raised the hue and cry, but Gobryas and his friends covered the cry with their shouts, as though they were revelers themselves. And thus, making their way by the quickest route, they soon found themselves before the king's palace. (27) Here the detachment under*

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<sup>81</sup> <https://www.livius.org/sources/content/herodotus/cyrus-takes-babylon/>

<sup>82</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akitu>

<sup>83</sup> Gubaru <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/1040529>

*Gobryas and Gadatas found the gates closed, but the men appointed to attack the guards rushed on them as they lay drinking round a blazing fire, and closed with them then and there. (28) As the din grew louder and louder, those within became aware of the tumult, till, the king bidding them see what it meant, **some of them opened the gates and ran out.** (29) Gadatas and his men, **seeing the gates swing wide, darted in, hard on the heels of the others who fled back again, and they chased them at the sword's point into the presence of the king.** (30) They found him on his feet, with his drawn scimitar in his hand. By sheer weight of numbers they overwhelmed him: and not one of his retinue escaped, they were all cut down, some flying, others snatching up anything to serve as a shield and defending themselves as best they could.*

The prophecy of Isaiah regarding Cyrus was literally fulfilled that night: “(I will) **open doors before him so that gates will not be shut ... (I) will shatter the doors of bronze, and cut through their iron bars,**” (Is 45:1).

Not only would the Persians find King Belshazzar with a “scimitar” (or *shamshir*, a curved sword<sup>84</sup>) in his hand, but soiled garments as well, for this was the night “the fingers of a man’s hand emerged and began writing... on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, and (Belshazzar) saw the back of the hand that did the writing, (and) the king’s face grew pale, and his thoughts alarmed him; and **his hip joints went slack**, and his knees began knocking together” (Dan 5:5,6). Or, as the International Standard Version translates it, “utterly frightened, **he lost control of his own bowels** and his knees knocked together.”<sup>85</sup> In other words, per the prophecy of Isaiah, Cyrus would “**loose the loins of kings,**” (Is 45:1).

It was the night Daniel interpreted the writing on the wall: “Your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians,” (Dan 5:28). As scripture tells it, and as historians record it, “that same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain,” (v 30). And in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy to Cyrus, all the treasures found in the Babylonian capital were his for the taking.

This is the method by which God performs His Works in the present world – he appoints men to accomplish his work according to his commands and directions: Moses appointed to lead his People and to build his tabernacle, David and Solomon and Cyrus appointed to construct his temples, and the Son of Man Jesus appointed to redeem, reconcile and resurrect his Holy Ones.

Following the proclamation of Cyrus for the Jews to return to Jerusalem to build the Temple of the LORD, a man named Zerubbabel emerged as the leader of the “households of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites..., even everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem,” (Ezra 1:5).

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<sup>84</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shamshir>

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%205&version=ISV>

## Zerubbabel's Temple: Pre-Cursor to the Second Temple

The Book of Ezra begins by repeating the proclamation of King Cyrus that “whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of LORD,” Ezra 1:3. Ezra then recounts the first return: “Then the heads of fathers’ households of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites arose, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. And all those about them encouraged them with articles of silver, with gold, with goods, with cattle, and with valuables, aside from all that was given as a freewill offering.

“Also King Cyrus brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and put in the house of his gods; and (Cyrus’ treasurer Mithredath) counted them out to Sheshbazzar<sup>86</sup>, the prince of Judah... (who) brought them all up with the exiles who went up from Babylon to Jerusalem,” Ezra 1:5-11. Ezra chapter 2 then enumerates the “people of Israel” who returned under the leadership of “Zerubbabel, Jeshua (or Joshua), Nehemiah” and other leaders (2:2).

After the journey out of Babylon, “some of the heads of fathers’ households, when they arrived at the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem, offered willingly for the house of God to restore it on its foundation,” (Ezra 2:68). Then, after the exiles had dispersed into the cities of the countryside, they gathered in the seventh month “together as one man to Jerusalem” to “celebrate the Feast of Booths,” and Joshua and his brothers the priests “built the altar... to offer burnt offerings on it, (according to) the law of Moses” (Ezra 3:1,2). Then began the work of collecting “cedar wood from Lebanon” (vs 7) to prepare for construction of the house of the Lord.

And so “in the second year [~548 BC] of their coming to the house of God..., Zerubbabel... and Jeshua... and all who came from the captivity... began the work” (Ezra 3:8) of laying the foundation of the temple: “Now when the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites... with cymbals, to praise the LORD according to the directions of King David of Israel... And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid,” Ezra 3:10,11. But many of the older priests and heads of households who had seen the glory of the first temple “wept with a loud voice” when they saw the foundation, so that “the people could not distinguish the sound of... joy from the sound of... weeping” (v 12,13).

But then the enemies of the Jews began to discourage and frighten them from building the actual temple, and hired lawyers to file restraining orders against them and send letters of accusation to the king in Persia, from Cyrus “even until the reign of Darius”

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<sup>86</sup> Sheshbazzar was likely Zerubbabel’s Babylonian name: “Some thus suppose that Zerubbabel—like Daniel and the three young Hebrews who were his companions—simply bore two names, the Hebrew ‘Zerubbabel’ [‘sown in Babylon’] and the Babylonian ‘Sheshbazzar’ [‘seed of Babylon’].” [www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Zerubbabel](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Zerubbabel)

(Ezra 4:4,5).<sup>87</sup> “So work on the house of God in Jerusalem ceased, and it was stopped until the second year [521 BC] of the reign of Darius [I] king of Persia,” (Ezra 4:23,24). So for about 15 years the work of constructing the temple was abandoned by the Jews.

It was then that the prophet Haggai began to “prophes(y) to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel” (Ezra 5:1): “In the second year of Darius [The Great] the king,... the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel..., the governor of Judah, and to Joshua... the high priest saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “This people says, ‘The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt.’... Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?... Consider your ways! You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes...

““Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified... You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why?... BECAUSE OF MY HOUSE WHICH LIES DESOLATE, while each of you runs to his own house. Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew, and the earth has withheld its produce,”” Haggai 1:1-10.

In response to God’s admonition, “Zerubbabel... and Jeshua... arose and began to rebuild the house of God... And the prophets of God were with them supporting them” (Ezra 5:2). As Haggai writes: “(They), with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him... So the LORD stirred up the spirit (of them all), and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,” Haggai 1:12-14.

But then Tattenai, who was the governor of the entire Persian province west of the Euphrates River, came to them and asked, “Who issued you a decree to rebuild this temple and to finish this structure?” (Ezra 5:3). No doubt Zerubbabel cited king Cyrus’ decree, and then on top of that “told them... what the names of the men were who were reconstructing (the) building” (v 4).

Tattenai immediately sent a letter off to Darius the Great: “Let it be known to the king, that we have gone to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God, which is being built with huge stones, and beams are being laid in the walls; and this work is going on with great care and is succeeding in their hands,” Ezra 5:8,9. Tattenai then relayed in the letter that he had asked them who had issued a decree to rebuild the temple, and what their names were, and wrote that they had replied: “We are servants of the God of heaven and earth and are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished.

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<sup>87</sup> Ezra 4:6-23 is a parenthetical insert in the narrative, referencing a future time during the reign of Artaxerxes, who ruled from 465-425 BC.

“But because our fathers had provoked the God of heaven to wrath, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this temple and deported the people to Babylon.

“However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God. And also the gold and silver utensils of the house of God which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, and brought them to the temple of Babylon, these King Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon, and they were given to one whose name was Sheshbazzar<sup>88</sup>, whom he had appointed governor.<sup>89</sup> And he said to him, ‘Take these utensils, go and deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt in its place.’ Then that Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations<sup>90</sup> of the house of God in Jerusalem; and from then until now it has been under construction, and it is not yet completed,” Ezra 5:8-16.

Tattenai concluded his letter with an appeal: “If it pleases the king let a search be conducted in the king’s treasure house, which is there in Babylon, if it be that a decree was issued by King Cyrus to rebuild this house of God at Jerusalem; and let the king send to us his decision concerning this matter,” Ezra 5:17.

King Darius assented to the request, and conducted the search, which resulted in the discovery “in Ecbatana in the fortress, which is in the province of Media, a scroll” (Ezra 6:2) containing a “memorandum” of Cyrus’ decree: “In the first year of King Cyrus, (he) issued a decree: ‘Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the temple... be rebuilt and... let the cost be paid from the royal treasury,’” (vss3,4).

Darius then issued his own decree: “Tattenai..., keep away from there. Leave the work on the house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews... rebuild this house of God on its site. Moreover,... the full cost (of the rebuilding) is to be paid to these people from the royal treasury out of the taxes of the provinces beyond the River, and that without delay. And whatever is needed, both young bulls, rams, and lambs for a burnt offering to the God of heaven,... as the priests in Jerusalem request, it is to be given to them daily without fail, that they may offer acceptable sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons,” (Ezra 6:6-10).

King Darius then made an ominous threat: “Any man who violates this edict, a timber shall be drawn from his house and he shall be impaled on it and his house shall be made a refuse heap... And may the God who has caused His name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who attempts to change it, so as to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued this decree, let it be carried out with all diligence!” Ezra 6:11,12.

And so the temple was completed “on the third day of the month Adar (in) the sixth year of the reign of King Darius,” (Ezra 6:15).

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<sup>88</sup> Sheshbazzar is likely the Babylonian name for Zerubbabel [www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Zerubbabel](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Zerubbabel)

<sup>89</sup> Zerubbabel is identified as “the governor of Judah” in Haggai 1:1,14; 2:2,21

<sup>90</sup> Zechariah 4:9 makes clear, “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of (the temple).”

[www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Zerubbabel](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Zerubbabel)

As work on the building of the Temple progressed, Haggai the prophet sent a message from God to Zerubbabel and Joshua and the remnant people, as an encouragement to complete the work: “‘Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison? But now take courage, Zerubbabel,... take courage also, Joshua..., and all you people of the land take courage,... and work; for I am with you,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!’” Haggai 2:2-5.

Following Haggai’s word of encouragement, the book of Ezra records the completion of the rebuilding of the Temple: “And the elders of the Jews were successful in building (the Temple) through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished building **according to the command of the God of Israel** and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Atexerxes, (the three great) king(s) of Persia.

“And the sons of Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the rest of the exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy. And they offered for the dedication of this temple of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel. Then they appointed the priests to their divisions and the Levites in their orders for the service of God in Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses. And the exiles observed the Passover on the fourteenth of the first month... And the sons of Israel who returned from exile... ate the Passover. And they observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, **for the LORD had caused them to rejoice,**” Ezra 6:14, 16-22.

The temple they had built may have “seem(ed) like nothing in comparison” to Solomon’s Temple, but Haggai prophesied that one day, all the nations will “come with the wealth of all the nations; and I will fill this house with glory” so that “the latter glory of this house will be greater than the former” (Haggai 2:7). Zechariah also prophesied an encouragement to the workers: “Thus says the LORD, ‘I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house will be built in it,... My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem,’” Zech 1:16,17.

The Book of Nehemiah then recounts how on the day of the “dedication of the wall of Jerusalem” (Neh 12:27), before “all Israel” (v 47) “they read aloud from the book of Moses” (13:1). And so from that time on the Temple sacrifices were restored and “the contributions, the first fruits, and the tithes” were gathered into the temple chambers (12:44), and the priests and the Levites, and the singers and the gatekeepers “performed the worship of their God and the service of purification” (v 45).

Nehemiah also restored the observing of the Sabbath, commanding the Levites “that they should purify themselves and come as gatekeepers to sanctify the Sabbath day,” (13:22). And Ezra the priest, “the scribe of the law” (Ezra 7:12), came from Babylon and taught the people the commandments of Moses. So the Temple services were restored, and continued from then on, even through to Jesus’ day, over 500 years later.

## Zerubbabel's Temple Defiled by Antiochus IV Epiphanes

Daniel the prophet, living in exile in Babylon, had been given dreams and visions of the coming events from his day forward that would impact both the Jews and the world at large. In one vision, given to him by an entity of terrifying appearance, he had seen the rise of empires that would follow that of the Babylonian Kingdom under Nebuchadnezzar: the Persian Empire under Cyrus, the Greek Empire under Alexander, and then the breaking up and parceling out of Alexander's kingdom "toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants," but "to others besides them" (Dan 11:4). The rulers of these four parcels divided out of the former Greek empire came to be known in history as the *Diodachi* (Greek for "Successors").

Daniel 11:5-14 is the prophecy of the conflicts that would rage between the two most prominent factions of the Diodachi, the rulers of the Seleucid-controlled region of Asia Minor/Syria, to the north of Judea, and the rulers of the Ptolemaic-controlled region of Egypt, just south of Judea.

In Daniel's vision, the successive rulers of the Seleucid empire would each be referred to as "the king of the North" and the successive rulers of the Ptolemaic empire would each be referred to as "the king of the South." The battles between them would see their armies march back and forth through Judea and Samaria, and their kingdoms each claiming rule over the land of the Jews as their power and influence alternately advanced one over the other between the years 315 BC and 64 BC.

Beyond Daniel's prophetic vision in chapter 11, the Bible in its present form does not record the events of these conflicts as they transpired. One needs to turn to secular history, as well as the apocryphal writings (especially the First and Second Books of Maccabees), to understand the details of the struggles between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic rulers following the break up of the Greek Empire.

These conflicts reached a climax relative to the Jews with the rise of Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Seleucid lineage, who waged war with Egypt from 171-168 BC, defeating both Ptolemy VI and Ptolemy VII, and thereby capturing Palestine.

Antiochus IV was a zealot for Greek culture and religion, forcing Hellenism upon all his conquered territories, including the region occupied by the Jews, who had been faithfully observing their religion of Judaism through Temple sacrifices and Sabbath-keeping since the time of Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah and Ezra. Antiochus demanded his subjects worship the Greek gods, even claiming himself to be the "manifestation" of Zeus, thus taking the title "Epiphanes" – "God Manifest."<sup>91</sup> His detractors, on the other hand, called him "Epimenes" – "The Mad One."<sup>92</sup> He would soon show how deplorable he could be, by desecrating the Temple, the House of God, in a harbinger of the coming Abomination of Desolation of the Last Days as prophesied by Daniel, and Jesus himself.

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<sup>91</sup> [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Antiochus\\_IV\\_Epiphanes](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Antiochus_IV_Epiphanes)

<sup>92</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiochus\\_IV\\_Epiphanes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiochus_IV_Epiphanes)

Antiochus took advantage of an internal conflict that arose over the succession of high priest in Jerusalem between the descendants of Tobiah (Nehemiah 2:10; 13:4) and the current high priest Onias III, which threatened to disrupt the Temple order. When Onias' brother Jason (Hebrew *Joshua*) offered the king 440 talents as a bribe for the office of high priest, along with his intent to Hellenize the Jewish youth, Antiochus accepted. But when Menelaus, of Tobiad ancestry and unqualified to be priest, subsequently offered an even bigger bribe, Antiochus installed him to the position in place of Jason.<sup>93</sup>

During Antiochus' Egyptian conquest of 169 BC, Jason attempted to oust Menelaus by armed coup, and the king considered this a rebellion against him, and so marched on Jerusalem. Second Maccabees describes his assault on the Judean capital:

*“(Antiochus) commanded his men of war not to spare such as they met, and to slay such as went up upon the houses. Thus there was killing of young and old, making away of men, women, and children, slaying of virgins and infants. And there were destroyed within the space of three whole days fourscore thousand, whereof forty thousand were slain in the conflict; and no fewer sold than slain.”<sup>94</sup>*

He then, guided by Menelaus, proceeded to rob the Temple of “the holy vessels” and from the Temple treasury “a thousand and eight hundred talents.”<sup>95</sup> Then, in 167 BC, upon hearing that the Jews continued to reject Menelaus as high priest, Antiochus ordered Apollonius, governor of Samaria and Judea, to attack Jerusalem on the Sabbath and slaughter the Jews. A devout Hasidean Jew, Judas Maccabeus (Judah Maccabee), along with other members of his anti-Greek faction, escaped, and fled “into the wilderness.” Antiochus then ordered the Jews, under threat of torture or death, to completely abandon their religious practices and observe the Greek festivals and rituals. From the Jewish Encyclopedia online:

*“[T]he king's attention was next turned to the destruction of the national religion. A royal decree proclaimed the abolition of the Jewish mode of worship; Sabbaths and festivals were not to be observed; circumcision was not to be performed; the sacred books were to be surrendered and the Jews were compelled to offer sacrifices to the idols that had been erected.”<sup>96</sup>*

Finally, in an abominable act of desecration, Antiochus erected an altar to Zeus in the Jewish Temple itself, where “sacrifices were to be made at the feet of an idol in the image of the King.”<sup>97</sup> Devout Jews were outraged, and some joined the rebel guerrilla movement led by Maccabeus and his family. The fighters, who came to be known as the Maccabees, at first raided towns in the countryside, but eventually grew into a sizable army. In 164 BC the Maccabees re-captured Jerusalem from its Seleucid occupiers.

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<sup>93</sup> From Babylon to Bethlehem, pg 77 <https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ellison/bethlehem/chapter12.pdf>

<sup>94</sup> pg 452, The Missing Books of the Bible Vol II, Halo Press 1996, Ottenheimer Publishers, Inc.

<sup>95</sup> pg 452, 453 *ibid*

<sup>96</sup> Antiochus IV Epiphanes, <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1589-antiochus-iv-epiphanes>

<sup>97</sup> Antiochus IV Epiphanes, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Antiochus-IV-Epiphanes>



In the same way Solomon was the partial fulfillment of the prophetic promise to David that his son would build the temple and sit on his throne forever, so Antiochus' desecration of the Temple was a partial fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy that forces from the King of the North would "desecrate the sanctuary... and... set up the abomination of desolation" (Dan 11:31). Just as the promised Messiah will fulfill completely the Davidic covenant, so a future desecration will be the true fulfillment of Daniel's vision, according to the prophecy of Messiah Jesus himself, declared 200 years after Antiochus had set up the statue of Zeus:

*"When you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place, ... then there will be a great tribulation," Matthew 24:15,21.*

Obviously, if Jesus considered that specific desolation to be in the future to his time, Daniel's prophecy could not have been completely fulfilled by Antiochus' desecration 200 years prior to Jesus' time. Both David's covenant promises, and Daniel's vision of the "abomination of desolation," will find their full completion in the "end time."<sup>98</sup>

The first act of the Maccabean rescuers upon securing Jerusalem was to rid the Temple of its defiling Greek statues, and then perform a ceremonial cleansing and re-dedication. First a new altar for the courtyard would need to be rebuilt, and then the articles of the tabernacle – the table of "shewbread," the altar of incense, and the Temple *Menorah*, the seven-branched *candelabrum*, or lamp stand – would need to be fabricated.

According to Jewish tradition as found in the *Talmud* – the official rabbinic commentary on the Hebrew scriptures – after a new altar had been built and the furnishings of the holy place restored, the priests could only find one small bottle of consecrated olive oil to light the lamp stand, enough to last for only a day. Miraculously, according to tradition, the lamp stand remained burning and giving its light for eight days, providing enough time to prepare additional purified, consecrated oil.<sup>99</sup> This miracle of the dedication of the Temple became the basis for the yearly Jewish holiday of *Chanukkah* (sometimes spelled *Hanukkah*), which means "Dedication."

The Second Book of Maccabees describes this re-dedication ceremony: "And they kept the eight days with gladness, as in the feast of tabernacles, when as they wandered in the mountains and dens like beasts. Therefore they bare branches, and fair boughs, and palms also, and sang psalms unto him that had given them good success in cleansing his place." From that moment on, it was decreed, "that every year those days should be kept of the whole nation of the Jews."<sup>100</sup>

And so Chanukkah, called the "Festival of Lights" or the "Feast of Dedication," is celebrated for eight days, beginning on the 25<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev*, the ninth month of the Jewish year, coinciding roughly with December of the Gregorian calendar. It is recorded in the Gospels that even Jesus and his disciples observed the "Feast of Dedication" (Jn 10:22).

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<sup>98</sup> Daniel 11:35

<sup>99</sup> [https://www.chabad.org/holidays/chanukah/article\\_cdo/aid/102978/jewish/The-Story-of-Chanukah.htm](https://www.chabad.org/holidays/chanukah/article_cdo/aid/102978/jewish/The-Story-of-Chanukah.htm)

<sup>100</sup> pg 467-8, *The Missing Books of the Bible Vol II*, Halo Press 1996, Ottenheimer Publishers, Inc.

## Building the Second Temple

Unfortunately, the Maccabean victory that freed Jerusalem was short-lived, as the eventual successor to Antiochus Epiphanes, his nephew Demetrius I Soter, sent his generals to Judea four times between 163 and 158 BC, each time leading a large army, to restore Syrian-Greek dominance. In the first assault, the Greeks under General Bacchides slaughtered the inhabitants of Bethzecha and set up Jacimus (or *Alcimus*), a Hellenistic Jew, as High Priest in Jerusalem, to the angst of the Hasideans and the Maccabean fighters.

Judas Maccabeus continued his attacks on the occupiers, and Demetrius dispatched his general Nicanor, who was also at this time governor of Cyprus, to quell the rebellion, and install himself as governor of Judea. Nicanor, who hated the Jews and had haughtily railed against them and their God, was defeated by the Maccabeans, and had to retreat. In a subsequent confrontation, Nicanor was again defeated, but this time he himself was killed. The Jews cut him in pieces and displayed his head and hand in Jerusalem.<sup>101</sup>

Demetrius then sent Bacchides on a third campaign, and in this conflict, occurring in 160 BC, Judas was defeated and killed. The Syrian general re-established the military fortress on the Temple Mount, and reinstated Jacimus to his position, though the priest died soon after. The general chased the Maccabean forces, now under command of Judas' brother Jonathan, across the Jordan River, but was unable to subdue them. Finally, after a fourth campaign, having been defeated multiple times in skirmishes with forces led by Simon, brother of Judas and Jonathan, and political pressures mounting against Demetrius, Bacchides agreed to a peace treaty with Jonathan, and swore an oath to never make war with them again.

The Seleucid dynasty was now beginning to unravel, as Demetrius faced a rival, his cousin Alexander Balas, who was being supported by the Egyptians. Demetrius offered Jonathan control of Judea, and in 153 BC, the Maccabean returned to Jerusalem and began to fortify it. Alexander, attempting to gain support of the Judean province for his bid at the Seleucid throne, offered to make Jonathan high priest and extended an alliance of peace. In 150 BC Demetrius was dethroned, and Alexander made good on his promises, bestowing upon Jonathan the added position of civil governor of the province.

Jonathan, along with his brother Simon, now took advantage of the political fractures in the Seleucid empire to expand their semi-autonomous territory and political clout through shrewd diplomacy. One such diplomatic mission to the Seleucid usurper Diodotus Tryphon in 142 BC backfired, however, and Jonathan was double-crossed, captured and executed. Simon then assumed the offices of "High Priest and prince of Israel,"<sup>102</sup> and in 141 BC the "Jews and priests (confirmed) Simon (as) their governor and high priest for ever."<sup>103</sup> The 100 year reign of the Hasmonean Dynasty had begun.

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<sup>101</sup> pg 487, *The Missing Books of the Bible Vol II*, Halo Press 1996, Ottenheimer Publishers, Inc.

<sup>102</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasmonean\\_dynasty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasmonean_dynasty)

<sup>103</sup> pg 428, *The Missing Books of the Bible Vol II*, Halo Press 1996, Ottenheimer Publishers, Inc.

Simon allied himself to the Seleucid claimant Demetrius II, and then with his brother Antiochus VII Sidetes, against Diodotus, who was then defeated by the latter in 138 BC. Simon was now free to rule the Judean province semi-independently from the Seleucid Greeks, and even petitioned recognition from the Roman Senate, which granted it in 139 BC. Peace and prosperity seemed assured, until 135 BC, when Simon was assassinated in a plot devised by his son-in-law Ptolemy.

Simon's third son, John Hyrcanus, then took over as High Priest and governor, and officiated for the next 20 years, after paying three thousand talents out of King David's tomb as a tribute to the Seleucid overlords, thus preventing an attack on Jerusalem by Antiochus VII Sidetes.<sup>104</sup> The Jews would come to refer to Hyrcanus as "*Yohanan Cohen Gadol* -- John the High Priest."

A civil war in the Seleucid empire gave Hyrcanus an opportunity to revolt, and in 110 BC he attacked and conquered Transjordan (the East Bank of the Jordan River), Samaria and Idumea (Edom). He then forced the Idumeans to convert to Judaism.<sup>105</sup> This would later come back to bite the Jews, as it would be an Idumean, Herod the Great, who would be declared "King of the Jews" by the Roman Senate in 40 BC. It would be Herod's father Antipater the Idumean who would make that possible by intrigue, in pitting two brothers, sons of John Hyrcanus, against each other for control of the dynasty.

Following Hyrcanus' death in 104 BC, his eldest son Aristobulus, named high priest by his father while living, decided to claim the title "basileus" ("king" or "emperor") as well, and put his mother and three brothers in prison, where his mother would die of starvation, to secure his rule over an independent Judea. He would be the first Hebrew to claim title to both high priest and king, a dual role prophesied as entitled to the coming Messiah alone (Zechariah 6:1-15). A year later Aristobulus died, suffering from a painful abdominal illness.

This was the very same fate that had fallen upon Antiochus Euphron, as recorded in 2 Maccabees, after the defeat of his general Nicanor: "Then swelling with anger, (Antiochus) thought to avenge upon the Jews the disgrace done unto him... (but) the judgment of God now follow(ed) him. For he had spoken proudly in this sort, that he would come to Jerusalem and make it a common burying place of the Jews. But the Lord Almighty, the god of Israel, smote him with an incurable and invisible plague: for as soon as he had spoken these words, a pain of the bowels... came upon him, and sore torments of the inner parts... shewing forth unto all the manifest power of God... (So) died he a miserable death," 2 Macc 9:4,5,8,28.

One is reminded of the same fate that came upon Jehoram king of Judah, when he "caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot and led Judah astray" (2 Chron 21:11) in the days of Elijah the prophet, who pronounced this judgment: "Because you have walked... in the way of the kings of Israel... and... killed your... own family,... you will suffer (a) severe... disease of your bowels, until (they) come out," (vs 12-15).

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<sup>104</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasmonean\\_dynasty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasmonean_dynasty)

<sup>105</sup> *ibid*

After the death of Aristobulus, his brother, Alexander Jannaeus (that is, Jonathan, or in Hebrew *Yannai*), then married Aristobulus' widow Queen Salome, and ruled Judea from 103 to 76 BC. He, like his brother, held the dual positions of king and high priest against the objections of the *Pharisees*, a sect of scribes, "sages" (rabbis), and priests that arose in the second century BC. The Pharisees resisted Hellenization and emphasized the rituals and restrictions of Mosaic Law. They eventually extended the purification rites of the temple priests onto the common people, an overreach Jesus admonished them for when he arrived in Judea in the first century AD: "The scribes and Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses... and they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders... But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men," Matt 23:2-5.

The rival faction to the Pharisees was the *Sadducees*, made up of priests aligned with the upper class elite, who were in favor of assimilating Greek culture and philosophy into Jewish life. The Sadducees favored and supported Alexander, while the Pharisees were to evolve into a populist political opposition party. The Sadducees, with their ties to the ruling class, controlled the maintenance and operation of the Temple, and served in administrative roles under the king. They rejected oral tradition, claiming only the written Torah was authoritative, and did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, or that spirits or angels existed. Overall, they represented an "aristocratic, wealthy, and traditional elite" within Judaism.<sup>106</sup>

Jesus also admonished the Sadducees in his day, when they attempted to trap him by posing a hypothetical question: "There were seven brothers (each married in their turn to the same woman according to the law); in the resurrection,... whose wife of the seven shall she be?" (Matt 22:25-28). Jesus answered, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures... For in the resurrection they... are (not) given in marriage, but are like (the) angels in heaven.., God is not the God of the dead but of the living," (vs 29-32).

During the period of Alexander's reign in Jewish history a system of religious courts was established, made up of 23 judges in each city, and a main tribunal of 71 judges, which acted as a sort of Supreme Court. The lower courts were known as the lesser *Sanhedrin*, and the higher tribunal in Jerusalem, which held court in the Temple, was called the *Great Sanhedrin*.<sup>107</sup> Alexander, as high priest, presided over the Great Sanhedrin court.

It was by this same Great Sanhedrin, under the leadership of the high priest Caiaphas, that Jesus was accused of blasphemy and delivered to the Roman governor Pilate for execution in the first century AD (Matthew 26:57-68; 27:1,2; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54,66-71; John 18:12-24). According to the Book of Acts, both the Pharisees and the Sadducees were actively involved in the Great Sanhedrin court: "But Paul, (who was brought down to the Sanhedrin by the Romans), perceiving that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees,... began crying out in the Council, 'Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!'" (Acts 22:30; 23:1,6)

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<sup>106</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sadducees>

<sup>107</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanhedrin>

Alexander's reign was marked by battles with Ptolemaic and Nabataean (Arabian) rulers and civil unrest. In the battle of Asophon against Ptolemy IX in 103 BC, up to 50,000 Hasmonean soldiers were killed.<sup>108</sup> In his successful assault to conquer Gaza in 96 BC, Alexander massacred 500 civilians who were hiding in the Temple of Apollo. Domestic strife broke out after Nabataean king Obodas I had defeated Alexander in the battle of Gadara, weakening his power. He provoked the Pharisees while serving as High Priest at the Feast of Tabernacles by purposely pouring the ceremonial water on his own feet, instead of on the altar. The crowd reacted by hurling insults at him – he responded in outrage by executing 6,200 of his own people. This event incited the Judean Civil War.

Judean rebels sought assistance from the Seleucid ruler Demetrius III to take down Alexander. At first, Alexander's forces were routed and he fled, but then the rebels turned against Demetrius, and he withdrew. Alexander rewarded their patriotism by slaughtering them in battle, then led their survivors back to Jerusalem, where he had 800 crucified, after first forcing them to watch as their wives and children were executed. The victims were mostly of the Pharisee sect. In 76 BC, Alexander died fighting the Nabataean Arabs in his continued quest to expand Judean rule to the east.

Alexander's wife, Salome Alexandra, by his deathbed request, became the ruling queen. Her sympathies had always been with the Pharisees, despite her husband's hatred of them, and she elevated them to the ruling class under her. She appointed her son Hyrcanus II as high priest, and she reorganized the Sanhedrin courts. She offered protection to the Sadducees, but relocated them from Jerusalem into fortified border cities. Jewish writings portray her reign in positive, glowing terms.<sup>109</sup>

After her death in 67 BC, Salome's son, High Priest Hyrcanus II, became king, serving in both roles. But his younger brother Aristobulus II had for years been plotting with the Sadducees, who controlled the territory's fortified border cities and their military forces, to usurp control for himself. Hyrcanus advanced against his brother, but many of his soldiers deserted him to join the armies of Aristobulus. Hyrcanus took refuge in the Temple, but was forced to surrender. Aristobulus now assumed the throne.

Antipater the Idumean (Edomite), whose family had been forced to convert to Judaism by Alexander's grandfather, John Hyrcanus, half a century earlier, had been appointed to serve as governor of Idumea by Alexander. He was wealthy, influential, married to a Nabataean noblewoman, and a close friend of the Arabian king Aretas III. After Aristobulus' victory, Antipater convinced Hyrcanus that his brother was plotting his death, and that he should take refuge with King Aretas. He also convinced Aretas to march on Jerusalem. With an army of 50,000, the Arabs laid a siege for eight months. Both brothers then appealed to the Romans, who by this time, 64 BC, had annexed Syria and executed the last Seleucid king Antiochus XIII. Aretas was ordered by Roman General Scourus to withdraw. Aristobulus slaughtered Aretas' forces as they retreated.

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<sup>108</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander\\_Jannaeus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Jannaeus)

<sup>109</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salome\\_Alexandra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salome_Alexandra)

Roman General Pompey was now in Roman-Syria, intent on ending local conflicts and bringing stability to that region and Judea. Aristobulus and Hyrcanus both appealed to him for support, but the general asked them to wait until he had dealt with the Nabataeans first.<sup>110</sup> The insolent Aristobulus instead returned to Judea and prepared for war, which incensed Pompey.

The Roman general marched south. Aristobulus sent him a promise of a tribute payment, but when Pompey's general came to collect it, Aristobulus' soldiers would not let him in. Pompey arrested Aristobulus and entered Jerusalem. Jews loyal to the Judean king fled to the Temple, and prepared to defend it. Pompey build a defensive wall, and then a ramp, and then brought in "siege engines and battering rams from Tyre."<sup>111</sup>

The siege of the Temple compound, as foretold in Daniel's vision of coming conflicts as recorded in Daniel 11:15,16, had begun: "Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege mound, and capture a well-fortified city... No one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand." The Jewish historian Josephus recorded the breach of the Temple walls by the Romans, after three months of difficult assault, as a horrific slaughter:

*"(The first Roman soldiers to enter) encompassed the Jews on all sides, and slew them; some of them as they were running for shelter to the temple, and others as they, for a while, fought in their own defence. And now did many of the priests, even when they saw their enemies assailing them with swords in their hands, without any disturbance, go on with their divine worship, and were slain while they were offering their drink-offerings and burning their incense, as preferring the duties about their worship to God before their own preservation. The greatest part of them were slain by their own countrymen of the adverse faction, and an innumerable multitude threw themselves down precipices; nay. Some there were... so distracted among the insuperable difficulties they were under, that they set fire to the buildings that were near to the wall, and were burnt together with them. Now of the Jews were slain twelve thousand; but of the Romans very few were slain, but a greater number was wounded."*<sup>112</sup>

Pompey entered the Temple itself, observed its contents, but did not touch anything. He then commanded the Jewish priests there to cleanse it, and resume the daily sacrifices and rituals. Pompey also restored Hyrcanus to his position of high priest with limited governorship, and greatly reduced the territory under Judean oversight, placing all regions in the area under the administrative rule of his general Scaurus.

Pompey then returned to Rome, taking Aristobulus and four of his children with him as his captives -- but one of the sons, Alexander, escaped and fled to safety. It was the year 63 BC, and Judea was now a Roman province.

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<sup>110</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pompey>

<sup>111</sup> *ibid*

<sup>112</sup> pg 436, Wars of the Jews, Josephus Complete Works, Kregel Publications, copyright 1960

With the siege and capture of the Temple compound by Pompey, in explicit fulfillment of Daniel 11:15,16, now completed, the second half of Daniel 11:14 was also now coming to its final conclusion as a direct result of that assault: “The violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down.” Those Jews who threw themselves from the walls of the Temple certainly fulfilled this prophecy most literally, but there were three last gasps of rebellion before the “violent ones” of Daniel’s people would finally be completely under the boot of the Roman Empire, and the hopes of restoring self-rule by the 100 year old Hasmonean Dynasty snuffed out forever.

Aristobulus’ son Alexander, the fugitive who had escaped Pompey’s clutches, managed to gather “a considerable band of men together”<sup>113</sup> and set about to challenge Hyrcanus, but Roman General Gabinius, who succeeded Scourus in Syria, sent a great force under the command of Marcus Antonius (Mark Anthony), who joined with the Idumean governor Antipater’s loyalists and the Jews aligned with the Roman authority under Hyrcanus, to defeat Alexander’s forces. With that, Gabinius subdivided Judea into multiple portions, to be administered by chosen members of the local aristocracy. Hyrcanus would remain high priest, in charge of the Temple and its services.

But then Aristobulus and his son Antigonus escaped back to Judea and roused their own band of rebels. Gabinius soon defeated them, and led Aristobulus back to Rome, where the Senate “put him under confinement.” His son Alexander, still not subdued, raised an army of 30,000 and set about “killing all the Romans that were in the country.”<sup>114</sup> Gabinius came again, and slaughtered 10,000 of the Jewish rebels, and the rest fled. He also established Antipater as an advisor to Rome for the province, as he had supplied Gabinius with funds and weapons for his campaign against the Parthians.

In the meantime, Julius Caesar, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel 11:17-19, has defeated the Gauls and invaded Britain during a ten year campaign (59-49 BC), but is ordered by Pompey, now in control of Rome, to disband his army or be judged “an enemy of the state”: “Then (the king of the North) will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn” (Dan 11:18). But Caesar does not disband; instead, in 49 BC, he “crosses the Rubicon” River from Gaul, and invades Italy: “So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land...” (v 19). Pompey escapes to Greece, and Caesar assumes role of dictator. He pursues Pompey into Asia Minor, where Pompey’s army is defeated. Pompey flees to Egypt, where he is assassinated just after coming ashore.

Now in Egypt, in the year 47 BC, Caesar fulfills Daniel 11:17, by taking Ptolemaic co-ruler Cleopatra VII as a lover, and arranging her to be co-ruler of Egypt with her younger brother, after Caesar had defeated the Egyptian forces with the help of Roman reinforcements from Syria: “And (the king of the North) will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will

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<sup>113</sup> pg 437, Wars of the Jews, Josephus Complete Works, Kregel Publications, copyright 1960

<sup>114</sup> *ibid*

put into effect; he will also give (the king of the South) the daughter of women to ruin (his dominion); (for) she will not take a stand for (the king of the South) or be on his side.” Cleopatra gave birth to a son, Caesarion, sired by Caesar, and visited Caesar’s villa in Rome several times. In 44 BC, she gave orders for her brother to be assassinated, so she could declare her young son as co-regent of Egypt, re-naming him Ptolemy XV.

“But he will stumble and fall and be found no more,” Daniel 11:19b – so prophesied the “One with Human Appearance” to Daniel about the king of the North, now the dictator of Rome, Julius Caesar. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, 44 BC, Caesar was stabbed to death in the Senate chambers by a group of senators led by Brutus and Cassius.<sup>115</sup> His great-nephew and adopted heir Octavian assumed sole power as Emperor in 27 BC (becoming Caesar Augustus) after almost 20 years of civil war and the deaths of challengers Mark Anthony and Cleopatra. The Roman Republic had come to an end and the era of the Roman Empire began.

Before his death, Julius Caesar had appointed Antipater II to be the imperial governor of Judea, and his sons Phasael and Herod as governors of Jerusalem and Galilee respectively.<sup>116</sup> Antipater was assassinated in 43 BC, but Mark Anthony promoted both sons to tetrarchs in 41 BC. Hyrcanus II remained king of Judea under Roman authority, despite an attempted coup by Aristobulus’ son Antigonus II.

The Parthians invaded the eastern Roman provinces in 40 BC, including Judea, and Herod escaped to Rome. The Parthians set up Antigonus II as king of Judea and high priest, and Antigonus exiled Hyrcanus to Babylon.<sup>117</sup>

Meanwhile, promising loyalty to the Romans, Herod was declared king of the Jews by the Senate. He then led a Roman army back to Judea in 39 BC, and laid siege on Jerusalem. In 37 BC, he captured Antigonus, who was then executed by Mark Anthony, according to the historian Josephus.<sup>118</sup> His death ended forever the Hasmonean Dynasty. Herod, wishing to preserve the city and the Temple for himself, paid his Roman soldiers and commanders great sums out of his own wealth to prevent them from ransacking and taking a spoil, imploring them to not leave him “king of a desert.”<sup>119</sup>

Around 19 BC, Herod began a massive expansion project on the Temple Mount, doubling the size of the plateau on which it stood.<sup>120</sup> He completely refurbished the Temple itself to be a magnificent structure, with “gleaming pillars and lots of marble”<sup>121</sup> with the sanctuary itself rising to 90 feet. Yet the sacrifices and daily services continued on throughout the project, so that this reconstructed Temple, while now referred to as “Herod’s Temple,” remained a continuation of Zerubbabel’s Second Temple.

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<sup>115</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius\\_Caesar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar)

<sup>116</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herodian\\_dynasty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herodian_dynasty)

<sup>117</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antigonus\\_II\\_Mattathias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antigonus_II_Mattathias)

<sup>118</sup> pg. 449, Ch XVIII, Wars of the Jews, Josephus Complete Works, Kregel Publications, copyright 1974

<sup>119</sup> *ibid*

<sup>120</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod\\_the\\_Great](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_the_Great)

<sup>121</sup> Second Temple of Jerusalem (Herod’s Temple) <https://factsanddetails.com/world/cat55/sub351/entry-5715.html>





*The Herod's temple model by Michael Avi-Yonah*

## **The Glory of the LORD fills the Second Temple**

Daniel's vision of chapter 11 continues: "Then in (Caesar's) place one will arise who will send an oppressor [or, *extractor of a tribute*] through the Jewel of his kingdom..." (v20). This, Caesar's heir and successor, Caesar Augustus, is the one described in Luke 2:1-5: "Now it came about in those days [about 4 BC] that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a [tax] census be taken of all the inhabited earth.... And all were proceeding to register for the census, everyone to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register, along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child [the Messiah – the Son of David]."

The first sixty-nine weeks (or, literally, sixty-nine *sevens*)<sup>122</sup> of the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks of Daniel Chapter 9 were coming to their fulfillment: "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until (the coming of) Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks..." Dan 9:25. From the context and a calculation of prophetic time, these first

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<sup>122</sup> pg 17, Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, Alva J. McClain, BMH Books, copyright 1969

sixty-nine weeks of the Seventy equals 486 360-day years<sup>123</sup>, or exactly 173,880 24 hour days. The decree to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem” was given by King Artaxerxes to Nehemiah on March 14, 445 BC: “And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes... (that Nehemiah) said to the King, ‘If it please the king,... send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it...’ And the king granted (authorizing letters) to (Nehemiah)... (to) rebuild the wall of Jerusalem,” Neh 2:1,5,8,17.

173,880 days from that date of the decree to rebuild the city one would arrive at April 6 -- or in the Hebrew calendar, Nisan 10 -- 32 AD, the very day Jesus rode into Jerusalem to be hailed as the promised Messiah, the King: “And the multitudes going before Him, and those who followed after were crying out, saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’” Matt 21:9. And, “‘Blessed is the King Who Comes in the Name of the LORD!’” Luke 19:38. As Pilate had asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”, Jesus answered, “It is as you say,” (Luke 23:3). The Sixty-Nine Weeks were fulfilled with the literal arrival of “Messiah the Prince [or, *King*].”

Upon completion of the First Temple, the “glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD” in the form of a thick “cloud” (1 Kings 8:10,11). Yet no such description of the coming of the “glory of the LORD” into the Second Temple can be found in Scripture – that is, until we read in Matthew 21:12-14, when Jesus, after having been hailed as the promised Son of David, “entered the temple and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple... (saying) to them, ‘It is written, “My House shall be called a house of prayer”’ ... And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.”

He was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah regarding the coming of the Messiah, which he had read in the synagogue at the beginning of his ministry: “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives. And recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable Year of the LORD,” Luke 4:18,19, quoting Is 61:1,2a. Then, as he sat down, Jesus declared, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing,” (v 21).

Ezekiel 40 – 48 describes the coming kingdom Temple, the Third Temple, to be in existence during the thousand year reign of Messiah the Prince upon this earth, when he comes again in glory, according to Jesus’ own prophetic words: “All the tribes of the earth... will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory... Then He will sit on His glorious throne... (And) the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,’” Matt 24:30; 25:31,34.

While in the first Temple the manifestation of the glory of the LORD was seen as a “cloud”, in both the Second and the Third Temples, the glory of the LORD is manifest by the presence of the LORD himself, in the form of the Son of Man: “Behold, the glory of

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<sup>123</sup> pg 19, ibid

the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory... And the glory of the LORD came into the (Temple) by the way of the gate facing toward the east... and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house,” Ezekiel 43:2,4,5. While Ezekiel’s vision is of the coming of the Son of Man in his kingdom glory to the kingdom (third) Temple, the disciples had already seen Jesus “transfigured before them (so that) His face shone like the sun, and his garments became as white as light,” (Matt 17:2), in fulfillment of the promise Jesus had given them just prior, that “there are some of (you) standing here who shall... see the Son of Man (as He will be seen when He is) coming in His kingdom,” (Matt 16:28).

Just as a voice is heard by Ezekiel in his vision of the kingdom Temple – “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever” (Ez 43:7) – so a voice had come out of a cloud to tell Jesus’ disciples, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; hear Him!” (Matt 17:5).

## **The Second Temple Destroyed By The Romans**

Jesus, after revealing himself to be promised Son of David, the Messiah King, entered the Temple to cleanse it and heal the sick and blind within its courts, and warned the Jewish leaders -- the priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and Sanhedrin -- that because they rejected Him as their King, “the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it” (Matt 21:43). Ironically, as he was leaving the temple, his disciples began to point out to him the magnificence of Herod’s temple buildings, which were “adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts,” (Luke 21:5). His response? “I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down,” Matt 24:2.

Losing their status and ruling positions was what the leaders of the Jews feared the most regarding Jesus’ claim to be the promised Messiah<sup>124</sup>: “The chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, ‘What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation’... So from that day on they planned together to kill Him,” John 11:47,48,53.

Jesus pronounced judgment over the Pharisees and leaders who rejected him: “If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a (siege) bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and will level you to the ground and your children with you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation,” Luke 19:42-44. But rather than repent, “the chief priests and the scribes and the leading

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<sup>124</sup> John 10:22-25,30 “At that time the Feast of Dedication took place in Jerusalem;... and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews... gathered around Him, and (demanded), ‘How long will You keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.’ Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe... I and the Father are one.’”

men among the people (devised schemes) to destroy Him,” (v 47). Jesus warned them that the destruction of the Temple and city would come within that generation: “Upon you (will) fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth... Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation... Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!” Matt 23:35,36,38.

The multitudes “held (Jesus) to be a prophet” (Matt 21:46), so he offered them advance notice: “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city; because these are the days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled... This people [who do not heed the warning]... will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,” Luke 21:20-24.

With Daniel’s prophetic Sixty-Nine Weeks now concluded at the arrival of “Messiah the Prince” – “until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks” (Dan 9:25) – the most significant milestone of Daniel’s prophecy occurs: “Then after the sixty-two weeks the **Messiah will be cut off and have nothing**,” Daniel 9:26a. This is one of the prophecies of which Jesus spoke when he declared, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer (crucifixion and death) and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:20,25,26).

This event is also marked in the Daniel 11 prophecy of the coming world conflicts, as occurring immediately after the peaceful death of Caesar Augustus, which occurred in 14 AD, and the rise of “a despicable person,” known in history as Tiberius Caesar, who ruled until 37 AD, up to three years after Jesus’ crucifixion: “Yet within a few days he [the King of the North, *that is, Caesar Augustus*] will be shattered, though neither in anger nor in battle. And in his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue. And the overflowing [or ‘restless’] forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and **also the Prince of the Covenant**,” Daniel 11:20-22.

By this event – the “shatter(ing of)... the Prince of the Covenant”, the “cut(ting) off (of)... the Messiah” – the chapter 11 prophecy of the coming conflicts takes a pause, in that the first Sixty-Nine Weeks have concluded, and the remaining Seventieth Week is yet to occur at the “end time” (Dan 11:35,40). Just as the sixty-nine weeks began with a decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, and the sixty-nine weeks ended with the death of Messiah, so the last remaining week will begin with a significant, identifiable event: “And after an alliance is made with (the King of the North) he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small force of people,” Dan 11:23. This is the very same event described in Daniel 9: “And (the prince who is to come) will make a firm covenant with the Many [the Jews, i.e., Israel] for one week [i.e., the Last One Week, the Seventieth Week]...” Dan 9:27.

A hard and fast line should be drawn between verse 26 and verse 27 of Daniel 9, for the events of verse 26 mark the end of the first 69 Weeks, and the event of verse 27 marks the start event of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel's vision. The same is true for Daniel 11 – a hard and fast line should be drawn between verse 22 and verse 23, for the events of verse 22 mark the end of the 69 Weeks, and the event of verse 23 marks the start of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week. All the events described in Daniel 11:23-30 take place in the first half of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week, the first 3 ½ years, as in 42 months (Rev 11:2), as in 1,260 days (Rev 11:3), of the tribulation. The events of verses 31 to the end of chapter 12 and the end of Daniel's book describe the last half of the 70<sup>th</sup> Week, the last 1,290 days, the last "time, times and half a time" (Dan 12:7) of the "time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time," (v 1), the "final period of the indignation (to take place at) the appointed time of the end" (Dan 8:19).

And so the same is true for the vision of the Ram and the Goat in Daniel 8 – a hard and fast line should be drawn between verse 8 and verse 9, for verse 8 describes the break up of Alexander's Greek Empire, while verse 9 begins to describe the coming of the "little horn" who "(will grow) exceedingly great... and (grow) up to the host of heaven and (will cause) some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth... (And) it (will) even magnif(y) itself to be equal with the Commander of the host..." (vs 9-11).

This a description of the "King of the North" of chapter 11, the "prince who is to come" of chapter 9, and it is the same "little horn" of chapter 7, in the vision of the Four Dreadful Beasts. There the line should be drawn between verse 7 and verse 8. And as well, in chapter 2, the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the line should be drawn between verse 40 and verse 41, for verse 40 is describing the Roman Empire of the past, while verse 41 on is describing the coming "divided kingdom" that shall be crushed and defeated by the coming of the "kingdom which shall never be destroyed", set up by "the God of heaven," which shall "put an end to all these (other) kingdoms," but "will itself endure forever" (v 44).

So as the Messiah is "cut off" after the conclusion of the 69 Weeks, so also the "people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary" (Dan 9:26), again, "after the sixty-two weeks" is finished. This is the same prophecy event spoken of by Jesus about the Temple: "Do you (admire) these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another which will not be torn down," Mark 13:2.

In 66 AD, the rebellious Jews – the "restless ones" -- staged a revolt against Roman occupation. Caesar Nero sent general Vespasian to quell the rebellion, which conflict came to be known in history as the "Great Jewish Revolt."<sup>125</sup> After securing the region of Galilee, Vespasian returned to Rome as Emperor in 69 BC, leaving his son Titus in charge of the assault on Jerusalem, in to where the rebels had taken refuge. In 70 AD, following a seven-month siege, the walls were breached, and the Roman army burned and ransacked nearly the entire city.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Jewish-Roman\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Jewish-Roman_War)

<sup>126</sup> *ibid*

The Romans' final assault was upon the Temple itself, into which the remaining starving rebels had retreated. Once inside, the Roman soldiers set fire to the buildings, and began pillaging the treasures in a frenzy that even Titus could not hold back. As the plundering and burning of the Temple continued, Josephus the Jewish historian recorded the massacre:

*While the holy house was on fire, everything was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those that were caught were slain; nor was there a commiseration of any age, or any reverence of gravity; but children, and old men, and profane persons, and priests, were all slain in the same manner; so that this war went round all sorts of men, and brought them to destruction, and as well those that made supplication for their lives, as those that defended themselves by fighting. The flame was also carried a long way, and made an echo, together with the groans of those that were slain...*<sup>127</sup>

With the Temple aflame and the Jews vanquished, the Romans continued their destruction and pillaging:

*And now the Romans, judging that it was in vain to spare what was round about the holy house, burnt all those places, as also the remains of the cloisters and the gates... They also burnt down the treasury-chambers, in which was an immense quantity of money, and an immense number of garments, and other precious goods, there repositated... The soldiers also came to the rest of the cloisters that were in the outer [court of the] temple, whither the women and children and a great mixed multitude of the people fled, in number about six thousand. But before [Titus] had determined anything about these people, ... the soldiers were in such a rage, that they set the cloister on fire... (None) escape(d) with his life.*<sup>128</sup>

After the destruction by the Romans, nothing remained of the Temple area. Every stone had been thrown down and overturned as they searched for remaining treasure, in literal fulfillment of Jesus' judgment pronouncement. The only vestige of the once great Temple platform was a wall to the west, now called the "Western Wall." The Temple Mount, devoid of any Jewish structures, is now home to a Muslim shrine and mosque, and will remain in that condition until Israel reclaims the entirety of Jerusalem, and once again rebuilds the Temple, which must exist in the latter days for certain prophecies, especially Jesus' prophecy of the Abomination of Desolation, to be fulfilled.

Until then, "Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," (Luke 21:24). So as Isaiah declared: "Thy holy people possessed Thy sanctuary for a little while, (but) our adversaries have trodden it down... Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, has been burned by fire; and all our precious things have become a ruin. Wilt Thou restrain Thyself at these things, O LORD? Wilt Thou keep silent and afflict us beyond measure?" Isaiah 63:18; 64:11,12.

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<sup>127</sup> pg 581, Wars of the Jews, Josephus Complete Works, Kregel Publications, copyright 1974

<sup>128</sup> pg 582, ibid

## **God Constructs an Earthly Temple...**

### **THIRD: The Temple of The Tribulation / Millennial Kingdom**

*“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place [the temple]..., then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains;... for then there will be a great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall,”* Matthew 24:15,21

*“Behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east... and (it) filled the house... And He said to me, ‘Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever,’”* Ezekiel 43:2,5-7

Jesus made clear to his disciples that the “sign of (His) coming, and of the end of the age” (Matt 24:3) would be marked by “tribulation, (when those who hold to His testimony<sup>129</sup>) will (be killed, and) hated by all nations on account of My name” (v 9). “Then,” he told them, “the end shall come... when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, **standing in the holy place**... for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until (then), nor ever shall... (And) immediately after the tribulation of those days... all the tribes of the earth... will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory... (And) the Son of Man... will sit on His glorious throne, and all the nations will be gathered before Him... Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,’” Matt 24:14,15,21,29,30; 25:31,32,34.

The earthly kingdom reign of Christ the King cannot come until the great tribulation has transpired, and the great tribulation begins when the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel is seen “standing in the holy place.” And the “holy place” in this context IS the Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount in the city of Jerusalem: “And forces from (the king of the North) will arise and desecrate the **sanctuary fortress** and do away with the regular sacrifice... and... set up the abomination of desolation,” Daniel 11:31.

The King cannot come unless the Temple is first rebuilt, and standing on the Temple Mount. That is the logical imperative of Jesus’ own prophecy. Today, there is no Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. There is the same barren plateau left by the Romans in the first century AD, with nothing but a Muslim shrine standing on its stones. Jews are not allowed to pray on the Mount, only Muslim prayers are heard by visitors.

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<sup>129</sup> Revelation 12:17 “The dragon... went off to make war with (those)... who... hold to the testimony of Jesus.”

## Tribulation Temple: Pre-Cursor to the Third Temple

How could a third temple ever be built, with a Muslim shrine standing in its courts? The Revelation of John, which describes in detail the coming tribulation, gives a hint as to how that could be possible in today's current situation: "And there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, 'Rise and measure the temple of God,... **(but) leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city...**'" Rev 11:1,2. From this, one might conclude that while the Third Temple could exist, its "Court of the Gentiles," which normally would surround and remain an integral component of it, would not be counted as a part of its compound, but would somehow be excluded from it, trampled "underfoot" by "the nations," the Gentiles, which includes Muslims.

In looking at the current temple mount from a bird's eye view, the Muslim Dome of the Rock appears to dominate the area, yet just to the north of the shrine is an extensive open space, just large enough to potentially contain the temple structures themselves – including the court of the priests where the altar of burning would stand – yet only by excluding the Court of the Gentiles from the newly consecrated area.



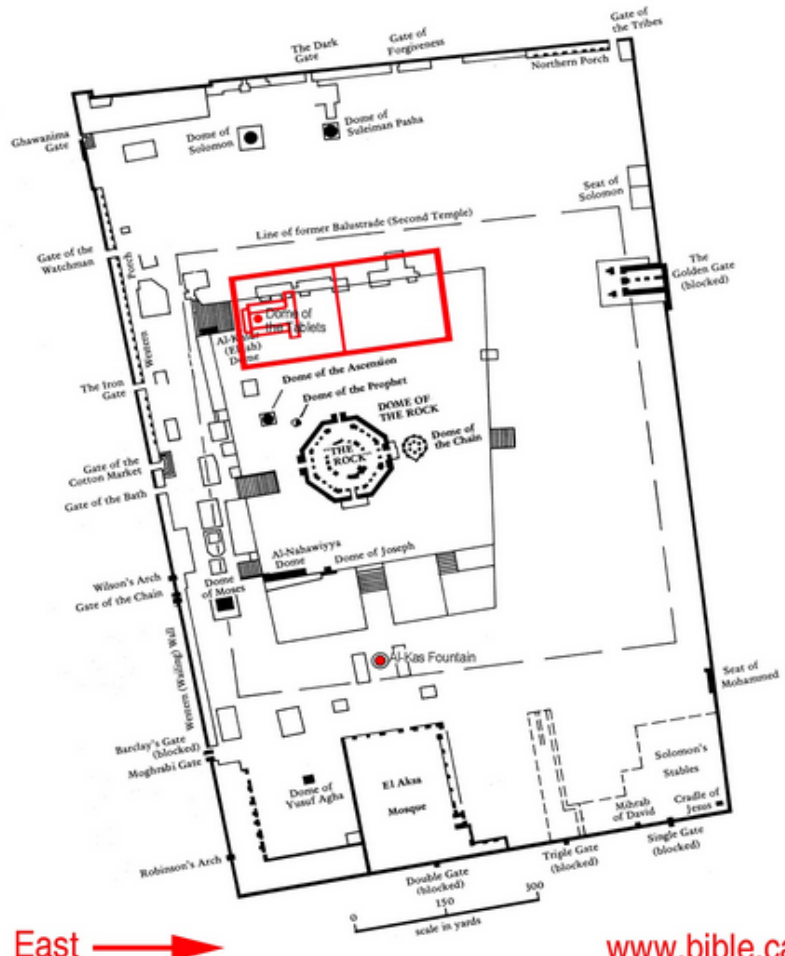
*Aerial of the Dome of the Rock from envato.com*

This location was considered the most likely original spot of the two previous Temples by former Hebrew University physicist Asher Kaufman (*d. 2015*), author of the book, "The Temple Mount: Where is the Holy of Holies", Har Yera'eh Press, Jerusalem, 2004. According to Kaufman, the Temple aligned with the original Golden (Eastern or Beautiful) Gate (the extant reconstructed one now sealed since medieval times), and



faced east, toward the Mount of Olives and the Jewish Cemetery on Mount Scopus. The Golden Gate was the only gate in the eastern wall of the Temple Mount, and is believed to be the gate “through which Jesus as Messiah, entered Jerusalem.”<sup>130</sup> It is the gate through which the Anointed Prince shall travel coming to and from the sanctuary in the kingdom age (Ezekiel 44:1-3).

**Solomon’s Temple: Holy of Holies over Dome of Tablets  
(Asher S. Kaufman’s view, 1983 AD)**



Even if the precise location of the site of the Temple could be located on the Temple Mount, what could precipitate the building of it? Two billion Muslims would be in an uproar, and war would be inevitable. Yet perhaps a cataclysmic military action itself would be the very cause of the rebuilding, for immediately following the prophecy of the Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones, in which Ezekiel sees the final restoration of the “whole house of Israel” back to the Land, now fulfilled in our time, he receives another prophecy, in which Israel is invaded by a mighty coalition of armies from six nations:

<sup>130</sup> [https://madainproject.com/golden\\_gate\\_jerusalem](https://madainproject.com/golden_gate_jerusalem)

“Magog,” Persia (Iran), Ethiopia, Put (Libya), Gomer (an Eastern European nation) and Beth-Togarmah (Turkey) (Ez 38:1-6). “Magog” in the prophecy is identified as being led by “Gog... the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal.” Many believe this is a reference to the modern nation of Russia, considering the very name “Russia” is essentially derived from the ancient name “Rosh.”<sup>131</sup>

How could being invaded by armies cause the rebuilding of the Temple? It is the unexpected outcome of that invasion that compels Israel to “know that I am the LORD their God from that day onward” (Ez 39:22). What happens to the armies that come “to the mountains of Israel... like a storm;... like a cloud covering the land” (vs 8,9)? God says through Ezekiel, “My fury will mount up... and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel... And I shall call for a sword against (Gog) on all My mountains... And I shall rain on him, and on his troops... a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire, and brimstone... And I shall strike your bow from your left hand, and dash down your arrows from your right hand. You shall fall on the mountains of Israel... I shall give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field... Behold, it is coming and it shall be done,” (Ez 38:18-39:8).

It is from this miraculous defeat that God makes himself known to Israel: “And My holy name I shall make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I shall not let My name be profaned any more. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, the Holy One of Israel,” Ez 39:7. What happens when “they shall live on the land that (God) gave to Jacob (His) servant?” God says: “I will make a covenant of peace with them;... I will place them and multiply them, and **will set My sanctuary in their midst forever**... And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, **when My sanctuary is in their midst forever**,” Ez 37:25-28.

To engage in a moment of conjecture, perhaps these troops enter Israel to act as “peacekeepers” in a brokered two state peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, who knows. Such a force would likely occupy the so-called “West Bank”, the valley of the Jordan River, from Galilee to the desert. That could account for this description of their burial: “On that day... I shall give Gog a burial ground there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea... So they will bury Gog there with all his multitude, and they will call it the valley of Hamon-gog (‘the multitude of Gog’)... So they will cleanse the land,” Ez 39:11,16. Conjecture aside, invasion and defeat “is coming.”

And whatever the motivation, while Israel is at the present time hesitant to claim sovereignty over the Temple Mount, it will eventually build a truncated Temple – the Tribulation Temple – in order for bible prophecy, including Jesus’ own, to come to pass literally. Undoubtedly this temple will be modest in stature, as Moses’ traveling tabernacle and Zerubbabel’s exiles-built temple were before it. But it shall be built.

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<sup>131</sup> <https://www.oxfordbiblechurch.co.uk/index.php/books/the-imminent-invasion-of-israel/541-appendix-5-where-is-rosh>: Wilhelm Gesenius, considered by Hebrew scholars as one of the greatest scholars of the Hebrew language, unquestionably believed that Rosh in Ezekiel was a proper noun identifying Russia..”

## The Tribulation Temple Defiled by The Prince Who Is To Come

Just as Moses' tabernacle was desecrated when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 4), and just as Zerubbabel's temple was defiled by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (2 Maccabees 6), so the tribulation temple will be defiled by "the prince who is to come" according to Daniel's prophecy: "The prince who is to come... will make a firm covenant with the Many for (the final) one week, but **in the middle of the week** he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate... And forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice, and... set up the abomination of desolation," Daniel 9:26,27; 11:31. Very likely, those two previous desecrations were simply preludes of this coming final desolation in the time of the end.

This desolation prophecy, repeated by Jesus in Matthew 24:15-21, is the culmination of the "indignation" that must be "finished" (Dan 11:36) by a "complete destruction, one that is decreed, (being) poured out on the one who makes desolate" (Dan 9:27). This "final period of the indignation... pertains to the appointed time of the end" (Dan 8:19). It is when the "little horn... uttering great boasts... (will) wag(e) war with the saints and overpower() them, until the Ancient of Days (comes), and (passes) judgment... in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrive(s) when the saints (take) possession of the kingdom" (Dan 7:8,21,22).

It is the time of the Seventieth Week of Daniel (Dan 9:24-27), when the "small horn... magnifie(s) itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it remove(s) the regular sacrifice from Him, and (throws down) the place of His sanctuary" (Dan 8:9-11). It is the "time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time" (Dan 12:1), just as Jesus repeated: "When you see the abomination of desolation spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place... there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world..." Matt 24:15,21.

It is the seven year tribulation, when the "son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship,... takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God," (2 Thess 2:3,4). This will occur "in the middle of the week" (Dan 9:27), when "authority (is given to him) to act for forty-two months... (and) blasphem(e) against God... and His tabernacle" (Rev 13:5,6). But then "the Lord will slay (him) with the breath of His mouth and bring (him) to an end by the appearance of His coming" (2 Thess 2:8), when "the Son of Man (will come)... with power and great glory," (Matt 24:30).

The Ark of the Covenant existed in the Holy of Holies of the First Temple, but was absent from the Second Temple, the Temple Jesus entered to "proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:19, quoting Isaiah 61:2a), but not to proclaim "the day of vengeance of our God" (Is 61:2b). According to 2 Maccabees 2:1-8, Jeremiah the prophet, "being warned of God, commanded the tabernacle and the ark to go with him, as he went forth into the mountain where Moses climbed up, and saw the heritage of God. And when Jeremiah came (there), he found a hollow cave, wherein he laid the tabernacle and the

ark, and the altar of incense, and so stopped the (entrance)... (And) Jeremiah (said to his followers), 'As for that place, it shall be unknown **until the time that God gather His people again together**, and receive them unto mercy. Then shall the Lord show them these things, and the glory of the Lord shall appear, and the cloud also, as it was (shown) to Moses, and as when Solomon desired that the place might be honorably sanctified."

Since the Kingdom Temple will not possess the ark of the covenant ("in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land... they shall say no more, 'The Ark of the Covenant of the LORD,' and it shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they miss it, nor shall it be made again, [but] at that time they shall call Jerusalem 'The Throne of the LORD,' (for) all the nations will be gathered to it," Jeremiah 3:16,17), this time that the ark is found must be the time before the kingdom, when the Tribulation Temple is to be built.

In fact, to find and have possession of the actual tabernacle curtains, the actual ark, and the actual altar of incense that were in Solomon's Temple, yet have no place in which to house these articles, would be as egregious as David having placed the ark in a tent of his own creation within his own city, the "city of David," while the tabernacle of Moses remained many miles away in Gibeon (1 Chron 15:1;16:1,39). For that, a great pestilence came over the land, until the place of presence was purchased, the tabernacle erected thereupon, and the ark placed within the Holy of Holies (2 Samuel 24). Could the invasion of Israel by the six nation military coalition be considered an equal plague upon the Land? Will the discovery and possession of the Ark of the Covenant, and the miraculous slaughter of the invading armies, be the overwhelming motivation for the Nation of Israel to finally take possession of the Temple Mount and rebuild the Third Temple?

But why no Ark of the Covenant in the Kingdom Temple, if the Ark is found and restored to the Tribulation Temple? Could it be that the Ark, and the great year end event in which it plays a pivotal role – *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement – is actually symbolic of the events of the Tribulation itself? Is the High Priest a picture of the True High Priest? Is the sacrifice of the bull a picture of the "sacrifice in Bozrah,... a great slaughter (of)... young bulls... (on) the LORD('s) day of vengeance" (Is 34:6-8)? Could the blood that splatters the High Priest's pure white garments be picturing the "garments of crimson colors..., this One who is majestic in His apparel... (treading) the wine trough alone... (so that) their lifeblood is sprinkled on (His) garments... (on) the day of vengeance" (Is 63:1-4)? Could the goat slain be when God "punish(es) the... goats of... Judah" (Zech 10:3)?

Could the outstretched wings of the angels over the ark be picturing the "two wings of the great eagle... given to the woman (who gave birth to a son... who is to rule all the nations) that she might fly into the wilderness to her place (prepared by God, to be) nourished for (one thousand two hundred and sixty days)" (Rev 12:14,5,6)? Does that fulfill Isaiah 26:20-21? Could the ark itself, containing the tablets of Moses, the rod of Aaron, and the wilderness manna, be a picture of faithful Israel itself? If the indignation is finished, wouldn't a perpetual reminder of that time of distress be unnecessary?

## Building the Third Temple: “My Son Will Build the House”

Zechariah the prophet, living in the time of the return from the Babylonian exile, was told by an angel of the Lord of the jealousy God has for Jerusalem and Zion: “Proclaim, saying ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion...Therefore... I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; **My house will be built in it,**” declares the LORD of hosts’ ... “My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem... For behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst”” Zechariah 1:14,16,17;2:10.

Zechariah then saw a vision of Joshua the high priest, who was assisting Zerubbabel in the construction of the second Temple, standing before Satan in filthy garments, being accused by him. And the angel of the Lord said, “Remove the filthy garments... (for I) will clothe you with festal robes... (and) put a clean turban on (your) head” (Zech 3:1-5). The angel then instructed Zechariah that this Joshua was “a symbol” of the coming One True High Priest, saying, “for behold, I am going to bring in My Servant the Branch” (v 8):

*“Take silver and gold, make an ornate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest; then say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold, a man whose name is the Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and **He will build the temple of the LORD. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD,** and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices,””*  
*Zech 6:11-13.*

In the same way Joshua was a symbol for the coming Servant, called the Branch, so also Zerubbabel was a type of this coming one, called the “Top Stone”: “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit... What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!” ... (For) the hands of (this) Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands [the coming Zerubbabel] will finish it,” Zech 4:6-9.

It is because the Lord is “exceedingly jealous for Zion” that he “will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem (so that it) will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain” (Zech 8:2,3). At that time he “will bring them back, and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem, and they will be (His) people and (He) will be their God in truth and righteousness” (v 8).

The prophet is then told to encourage those working on the temple at that time: “Let your hands be strong, you who are listening in these days to these words from the mouth of the prophets (speaking) in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts (is being) laid, to the end that the temple might be built... It will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you that you may become a blessing. Do not fear; let your hands be strong,” Zech 8:9,13. At that time the “nations will come to seek the LORD” (v 22).

But first, the Lord is “going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around... In that day (God) will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples... And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it. (Then) in that day... (the LORD) will strike every horse with bewilderment, and his rider with madness... (And He) will save the tents of Judah... In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem... And it will come about in that day that (He) will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem,” Zech 12:2-4,7-9. This is the great “day of wrath” culminating with the “war of the great day of God” in which “the kings of the whole world” are “gathered... together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon” (Rev 16:14-16), when “he who sat upon (a white horse) called Faithful and True... wages war... (and) smite(s) the nations” (19:11,15).

This is the promised coming of the Son of David as King, in power and glory, to set up the kingdom and reign “over all the earth” (Zech 14:9). It is the beginning of the millennial kingdom, when “it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths... And the cooking pots in the LORD’s house will be like the bowls before the altar. And every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a (merchant – *i.e.*, *moneychanger*) in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day” (Zech 14:16,20,21).

Jesus prophesied of this day, when he “entered the temple and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers (saying), ‘It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer”’” (Matt 21:12,13). It will not be for Judah alone, but for all the nations, as Isaiah prophesied: “Foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD... I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer... For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples,” Is 56:6,7.

The Psalms declared the glory of the temple: “How lovely are Thy dwelling places, O LORD of hosts! My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD... How blessed are those who dwell in Thy house!... For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand outside” Ps 84:1,2,4,10. As David wrote in prophecy, “Because of Thy temple at Jerusalem kings will bring gifts to Thee” (Ps 68:29). Isaiah described the kingdom to come: “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising... Foreigners will build up your walls, and their kings will minister to you... For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish... (But) the glory of Lebanon will come to you, the juniper, the box tree, and the cypress together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I shall make the place of My feet glorious... They will call you the city of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel,” Is 60:3,10,12-14.

In the days that are coming, declares the LORD, “I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth... **And the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to prepare sacrifices continually,**” (Jeremiah 33:14-18).

Ezekiel, while an exile in Babylon, prophesied of the day when “(God’s) servant David will be king over (Israel)... and (they) will walk in (His) ordinances, and keep (His) statutes, and observe them. And they shall live on the land that (He) gave to Jacob (His) servant... and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David (His) servant shall be their prince forever... And (God) will set (His) sanctuary in their midst forever... And the nations will know that (He) is the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when (His) sanctuary is in their midst forever” (Ez 37:24-28).

This kingdom sanctuary is so magnificent, it required nine chapters in Ezekiel’s book to be described: “In the visions of God He brought me into the land of Israel, and set me on a very high mountain... And behold, there was a wall on the outside of the temple all around...” Ez 40:2,5. An angel then measured the wall, and the gates, the porches, the guardrooms, the outer court, the chambers of the court, the inner court, the tables “on which to slaughter the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering” (v 39), the chamber “intended for the priests who keep charge of the temple” (v 45), the nave of the tabernacle and its pillars, “the most holy place” (41:4), the raised platform “all around” (v 8), the “separate area with (a) building” (v 12), the altar, and “the table that is before the LORD” (v 22). The entire area was approximately 1 mile square (vs 16-20).

Ezekiel was then instructed to “describe the temple to the house of Israel... and let them measure the plan... Make known to them the design of the house,... all its forms, all its statutes, and all its laws,... that they may observe... all its statutes, and do them. This is the law of the house: its entire area on the top of the mountain all around shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house” (Ez 43:10-12). Then the statutes are described: “On the day (the altar) is built,... offer burnt offerings... and... sprinkle blood on it,” Ez 43:18. The Levitical priests “who are from the offspring of Zadok” are to minister to the Lord (v 19) by slaughtering bulls and goats, and sprinkling their blood: “They shall enter My sanctuary; they shall come near to My table to minister to Me and keep My charge... and sanctify My Sabbaths,” Ez 44:16,24.

The reconstruction of the kingdom temple to the measure and design of Ezekiel’s vision is the fulfillment of the covenant promise made to David, that he would one day have a son who “shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever” 2 Sam 7:13. Joshua Messiah is that Son, and he shall build that house.

It is the fulfillment of Daniel’s vision of the Seventy Weeks: “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and **to anoint the most holy place**,” Dan 9:24. “From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!” (Dan 12:11-12). Why? For then Jerusalem will be rescued by the coming of the King. But how long will “the transgression cause() horror, so as to allow... the holy place to be trampled?... For 2,300 (days); then **the holy place will be properly restored**,” (8:13,14). For then there will be a tremendous celebration of re-dedication of the cleansed and re-constructed temple, by the Son of Man, whose kingdom will never end (Dan 7:13,14,27).

## **The Glory of the Lord fills the Third Temple**

After the angel measured the temple, he then led Ezekiel to the gate facing east: “And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east... And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east. And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house,” Ez 43:1-5.

Then Ezekiel heard a voice from out of the temple: “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever” Ez 43:7. As Micah prophesied: “And it will come about in the last days that the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it. And many nations will come and say, ‘Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths.’

“For from Zion will go forth the law, even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war. And each of them will sit under his vine and under his fig tree, with no one to make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken... And the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and forever,” Micah 4:1-7.

“From (Bethlehem) One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity... He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God... At that time He will be great to the ends of the earth. And this One will be our peace.” Micah 5:2-5.

## **No Temple in the New Earth (Rev 21:22)**

God constructs his temple over three manifestations: Moses & Solomons’ Temple, Zerubbabel & Herods’ Temple, and the Tribulation & Kingdom Temple. But what about in the “new heaven and... new earth”, when “the first heaven and the first earth (have) passed away” (Rev 21:1)? Will there be a temple then -- a *fourth* temple? The simple answer is, no:

*“Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them... Behold, I am making all things new... And I saw no temple in (the new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from God), for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple,” Rev 21:3,5,10,22.*



## Six Works of God

### VI. He Creates (in the Making of Heaven and Earth)

*“Thus says the LORD, ‘Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being,’ declares the LORD,”* Isaiah 66:1,2

Creation, the making of heaven and earth, is God’s most primal work, for without the creation of the physical universe in which time and matter exists, there would be no need for any of his other works here previously investigated. There would be no nation of Egypt from where the children of Israel had escaped, no Mount Moriah upon which to build the temple, no man to redeem from sin and death.

There would be no construction of a temple, no collecting Israel back to the Land, no calling the righteous dead out of their tombs, no cleansing, no coming of the Righteous One. None of that would have been possible, or necessary, without the Work of His Creating. It is a Work worth exploring: “Great are the works of the LORD; they are studied by all who delight in them. Splendid and majestic is His work,” Psalm 111:2,3

And so the record of God’s Works, the Bible, declares God is “glad in His works”:

*“O LORD, how many are Thy works! In wisdom Thou has made them all; the earth is full of Thy possessions. There is the sea, great and broad, in which are swarms without number, animals both small and great... Thou dost send forth Thy Spirit, they are created; and Thou dost renew the face of the ground... Let the LORD be glad in His works,”* Ps 104:24,25,30,31.

Just as every other work of God is manifested over three events, so as to stand as a witness to his very nature as a triune God – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – so God’s Work of Creation – the making of the heavens and the earth – is also manifested over three creation events. If it were not so, the pattern of his performing his works – over three events – would be broken with his very first work.

The number three is the number of his Works, and it is his signature, just as Jesus declares three times he is the beginning and the end: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end,” Rev 22:13. And again he declares, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,... Who Is, and Who Was, and Who Is To Come,” Rev 1:8. It is why the Seraphim, standing above the Lord “sitting on a throne” call out three times, “**Holy, holy, holy**, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is filled with His glory,” Isaiah 6:3.

As Jesus is the beginning and end, so there is a creation at the beginning, and at the end. We shall first explore the creation of a new heaven and new earth, at the end.

## ***God Creates The Heavens and The Earth...***

### ***The New Heaven and The New Earth, At the End***

*“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea,”* Revelation 21:1

The book of the Revelation to John recounts the prophetic visions of the seven year tribulation, the thousand year reign of the King of kings, and the great white throne judgment, which brings to an end this present age: “And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them,” Rev 20:11. This book, what is called “The Bible,” begins with the story of the creation of the present heavens and the earth, and this is how the book nears its end, with a vision of the present earth and heaven having “fled away.”

Peter described this end of the present heaven and earth this way: “The day of the Lord will come like a thief; (after) which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.... All these things are to be destroyed in this way (:)... the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! (For) according to his promise we are looking for **new heavens and a new earth**, in which righteousness dwells,” 2 Peter 3:10-13.

John then saw what came after the present heaven and earth melted away: “And I saw a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away... ‘There shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.’ And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new,” Rev 21:1,4,5.

This new earth, and its capital city, the new Jerusalem, is then shown to John, who described what he saw in the final two chapters of the Bible: “And (an angel) carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone... The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone... And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

“And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

“And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the (new) earth shall bring their glory into it. And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed; and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it,” Rev 21:10,11,19,21-26.

From out of the city will flow a “river of the water of life”: “And (the angel) showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him,” Rev 22:1-3.

Isaiah prophesied of this new heavens and new earth, and the new Jerusalem, thousands of years ago, speaking the words of the LORD: “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create (new) Jerusalem for rejoicing, and her people for gladness. I will also rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people; and there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying... The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox;... They shall do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,’ says the LORD,” Is 65:17-25.

Will we live in this new creation? As John wrote, “The darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining... I am writing to you,... because you know Him who has been from the beginning... All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And **the world is passing away**, and also its lusts; but the one who (is in) the will of God **abides forever**... And this is the promise which (the Son) Himself made to us: **eternal life**... Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because **we shall see Him** just as He is,” 1 John 2:8,14,16,17,25; 3:2.

John saw the church in the new earth, in the vision he was shown: “And one of the angels... came and spoke with me, saying, ‘Come here, I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God... Nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only **those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life**... And **they shall see His face**, and His name shall be on their foreheads... And they shall reign forever and ever... Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates of the city... ‘I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things **for the churches**,” Rev 21:9,10,27; 22:4,5,14,16.

That includes us: “Christ... loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the (gospel), that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless... (For) Christ (nourishes and cherishes) the church, because we are members of His body,” Ephesians 5:25-27,29,30.

## **God Creates The Heavens and The Earth...**

### **The Six Days of Creation of the Present Heaven and Earth**

*“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed... And by the seventh day God completed His work which he had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made,”* Genesis 2:1-3

There obviously could be no “new heaven and... new earth” if a previous heaven and earth never existed before. We are, of course, living within that present physical universe right now, the one which shall “pass() away” with “intense heat” after the judgment, the one existing just prior to “the Alpha and the Omega,” who is “the beginning and the end,” creates a brand new universe in an age of “no (more) curse,” when “every tear” shall be wiped away, and “there shall no longer be any death... (or) mourning... (or) pain,” (Rev 22:5; 21:4). This new heaven and new earth age will be the true fulfillment of the typology of the *seventh day rest* of the creation account.<sup>132</sup>

The same “Alpha and Omega” who creates the new heavens and earth is the one who created the original creation, that is, he is “the Lamb,” “the Word,” the “Son,” the “Lord Jesus”:<sup>133</sup>

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. **All things came into being by Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being... The world was made through Him,**” John 1:1-3;10.

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers (through) the prophets..., in these last days has spoken to us (through) **His Son,... through whom also He made the world,**” Hebrews 1:1,2.

At some moment in time past, with the earth existing in complete darkness, formless and empty, at least as viewed from the vantage point of the “surface of the waters” (Gen 1:2), God performed a Work of Creating in six literal, 24 hour days:

*On Day One: He made light visible upon the dark earth, so that there was day and night.*

*On Day Two: He separated the waters above from waters below, with a sky between.*

*On Day Three: He gathered dry land together, separating it from the sea, and planted the land with vegetation and fruit trees.*

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<sup>132</sup> Genesis 2:1-3

<sup>133</sup> Revelation 22:20

*On Day Four: He made the lights of the sky visible – the sun, the moon and the stars.*

*On Day Five: He created all forms of life in the sea and birds of the sky.*

*On Day Six: He created the land creatures, including man, male and female, and blessed them.*

And then on Day Seven, with the heavens and the earth complete, and God rested from all His Work.

A hard and fast line can then be drawn after verse 4 of Genesis chapter 2, for thus ends “the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.”

*“It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it. I stretched out the heavens with My hands, and I ordained all their host... For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), ‘I am the LORD, and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in some dark land; ... There is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me. Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none other,’”* Isaiah 45:12,13,18,19,21,22

## ***God Creates The Heavens and The Earth***

### **In the Beginning**

*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,”* Genesis 1:1

*“And the earth (became a waste place and empty),”* Genesis 1:2

*“Then God (made the lights appear and all that was upon the earth),”* Genesis 1:3-31

As we read the Genesis story of God making the lights appear in the sky, and creating the things upon the earth below, there is a noticeable repetition, a cadence of *duality*, in every statement: Not only was the earth “formless” (or *a wasteland*), it was “void” (i.e., *empty*)<sup>134</sup>. Not only was “darkness... over the surface of the deep,” but “the Spirit of God... (moved) over the surface of the waters,” (Gen 1:2). When God said, “Let there be light,” the statement is again made, “there was light,” (v 3). God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters,” then repeated: “let it separate the waters from the waters,” (v 6).

This repetition of every creative act in the Genesis account continues through all six days of creation. Although it had already been clearly established that God had created an expanse that separated the waters from the waters there in Genesis chapter 1 verse 6, verse 7 repeats that very same thing: “And God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse.”

In verse 11, God said, “Let the earth sprout... plants yielding seed,” and immediately repeats the same: “Fruit trees bearing fruit... with seed in them, on the earth.” If that were not enough, we read, “And the earth brought forth... plants yielding seed... and trees bearing fruit, with seed in them,” in verse 12.

God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens,” (Gen 1:14), and then again: “Let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens,” (v 15). Though he had declared in verse 14 that the lights were “to separate the day from the night,” he repeated that in verse 18: “(The lights were) to separate the light from the darkness.”

Creatures of the sea and sky were created on the fifth day: “Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth,” (Gen 1:20). This is then repeated in verse 22: “Fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”

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<sup>134</sup> margin notes on Gen 1:2, New American Standard Bible, Collins World, copyright The Lockman Foundation 1975

In verse 24 God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures..., cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth.” It is then repeated: “And God made the beasts of the earth... and the cattle..., and every thing that creeps on the ground,” (v 25).

Finally, God declares, “Let Us make man in Our image...” (Gen 1:26). And it is repeated: “And God created man in His image,” (v27). He declares of them, “Let them rule over the fish... and over the birds... and over the cattle... and over every creeping thing... on the earth,” (v 26). And God repeats that command to man: “Rule over the fish... and over the birds... and over every living thing that moves on the earth,” (v 28).

Even the seventh day of rest is repeated: “His work... done,... He rested on the seventh day... from all His work which He had done,” (Gen 2:2). And again, “In (the seventh day) He rested from all His work which God had created and made,” (v 3).

Then the epilogue is given: “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created...” (Gen 2:4a). And then even that closing statement is repeated: “... in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven,” (Gen 2:4b).

An interesting thing then occurs – the repetition stops, and what might be considered to be a normal narrative style begins. No more repeating of every statement, just a singular flow of descriptive creative work on the part of God in creating Adam “out of the dust from the ground” (Gen 2:7) and the planting of a garden called Eden from out of which flowed a river. This singular narrative then continues for the rest of the book.

What is to be made of the distinct repetition of every act in the initial Genesis creation story? Why is every thing repeated twice? The mystery is even deeper: the duality is so pervasive and of such rapid cadence, that if every other word of the Hebrew text is removed to stand alone, it is discovered that the creation story is told... TWICE! Once, told by *every other word* beginning with the first word, and once again, told by *every other word* beginning with the second word! (See supplemental handout.)

The implicit meaning is this: there are two creation stories being told in Genesis 1:1 through Genesis 2:4. And the meaning of that is unavoidable: there are therefore two creations being expressed in that Genesis account – one in the beginning of a distant and long past heaven and earth, ruled by creatures of a pre-historic age, and, after an interval of emptiness and darkness, a second creation, one to be inhabited by modern man, along with all of the modern creatures we share this earth with today.

This is a bold assertion, one that requires additional substantiation. After all, as Paul declared, “Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses,” 2 Cor 13:1. And he was quoting the Law, at Deuteronomy 19:15: “A single witness shall not rise up against a man..., (but only) on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.”

Jesus himself, the Son of God, equal to God, the second person of the Trinity, insisted that there must be two witnesses, even of his own claim of divinity: “I am the light of the world... Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true... But... My judgment is true; for **I am not alone in it**, but I and He who sent Me (bears witness). (For as it is

written) in your law..., **the testimony of two (witnesses) is true.** I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me,” John 8:12-18. As we read in the Revelation of John, there will be two witnesses who prophesy in the time of the end, figuratively identified as “the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth,” (Rev 11:3,4), for “every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two.”

The written account of creation in Genesis chapter One is certainly a dependable witness to the fact that God created the heavens and the earth, and it certainly constitutes *one* witness. But is that one witness alone adequate to testify to God’s creative work, when the Law requires two or three? If not, who or what would be a second witness? And if there is such a “second witness” to God’s creative work, is that witness legitimized by God himself as a dependable, trustworthy witness?

The answer is, there *is* a second witness to God’s handiwork in creating the heavens and the earth, and that witness is declared by God to be *absolutely trustworthy*. And that witness is **the work itself**:

*“The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. (While) there is no (audible) speech, nor are there (written) words, (since) their voice is not heard; (nevertheless) their (sound) has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world,” Psalm 19:1-4.*

Paul was so convinced that the physical universe itself was a viable witness to God’s handiwork that he used it as a condemning judgment upon men who denied God:

*“The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all (godless) men who suppress the truth..., because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. **For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse... (to) honor Him as God, or give thanks... (or) see fit to acknowledge God (as the Creator),” Romans 1:18-21,28.***

The writer of Hebrews, most likely Paul (but perhaps Apollos<sup>135</sup>), confirmed the requirement of two or three witnesses in a matter: “Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy **on the testimony of two or three witnesses,**” Heb 10:28.

This concern for the witness of the physical world itself is why early fundamentalists were unabashed in their view that there were two creations being portrayed in the Genesis story: the first one summarized in one single verse, verse 1: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,” then, after unknown ages of time passed, none of which are described in the narrative of the account, the story picks up again, to describe the second creation, that of our present earth, and all that is in it.

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<sup>135</sup> <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-wrote-the-book-of-hebrews>



This view came to be known as the “gap theory,” and it gained favor in evangelical fundamentalist circles in part by the popularity of C.I. Scofield’s commentary notes in his reference bible, first circulated in the early 1900s. Scofield endorsed the idea postulated by Thomas Chalmers, who credited the Dutch Arminian theologian Simon Episcopius with originating it, when Chalmers wrote:

*"My own opinion, as published in 1814, is that it [Genesis 1:1] forms no part of the first day, but refers to a period of indefinite antiquity when God created the worlds out of nothing. The commencement of the first day's work I hold to be the moving of God's Spirit upon the face of the waters. We can allow geology the amplest time...without infringing even on the literalities of the Mosaic record."<sup>136</sup>*

These were the perspectives of the original literal fundamentalists, whose views influenced the fundamentalist movement for the next six decades, especially in American evangelical christianity, and who desired to simply reconcile the written biblical account, abridged as it was, with the vast discoveries being made in science, which explores and examines God’s “handiwork,” that gave conclusive evidence that the solar system, the planets, and the manifestations of its various creatures were much older than six thousand years, calculated from the genealogy of Abraham backwards to Adam. The “gap” of Genesis 1:2 was being filled in by the speech being “poured forth” from the mouth of God’s very own physical creation, the witness of his “handiwork.”

Then, in 1923, George McCready Price, a Canadian Seventh-Day Adventist, wrote a book called “The New Geology,” partly inspired by Seventh-Day Adventist prophetess Ellen G. White’s writing *Patriarchs and Prophets*,<sup>137</sup> in which he asserted geologists had “misinterpreted their data” and that the earth was relatively young.<sup>138</sup> Despite being challenged scientifically by geologists, Price insisted that all geologic strata, and the fossils contained therein, without offering any evidentiary proof, could be explained by the actions of the world-wide flood, described in the Bible as Noah’s Flood.

In the 1940s, a professor of hydraulic engineering and a convert to Christian fundamentalism, Henry M. Morris, stumbled upon Price’s writings, and thereafter adopted this “young earth” perspective. In 1961 Morris coauthored *The Genesis Flood* with Grace Theological Seminary professor John C. Whitcomb, in which they asserted the earth was only 6,000 years young, and that all appearances of age that would give evidence beyond that time span could be attributed to Noah’s flood event, or to **God having created everything “with a superficial appearance of history or age.”**<sup>139</sup> Morris founded the Creation Research Society (CRS) in 1963 and the Institute for Creation Research (ICR) in 1972 to promote his ideas, and Whitcomb went on to write additional books supporting this young earth view, including *The Early Earth* and *The World That Perished*.

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<sup>136</sup> McIver T., Formless and Void: Gap Theory Creationism, *Creation Evolution Journal* (8)3, 1988, p. 6.

<sup>137</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young\\_Earth\\_creationism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_Earth_creationism)

<sup>138</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_McCready\\_Price](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_McCready_Price)

<sup>139</sup> pg 40, *The Early Earth Revised Edition*, John C. Whitcomb, Baker Book House, c 1972

Morris and Whitcomb instantly polarized the evangelical community, influencing fundamentalists such as Jerry Falwell, who then institutionalized Young Earth Creationism (YEC) into the curriculum of his Liberty Baptist College, now Liberty University, and Ken Ham, who founded *Answers in Genesis*, the Creation Museum, and the *Ark Encounter*, a Noah's Ark-themed amusement park. Ham promotes YEC, rejects scientific evidence that would support an old-age universe, and considers even the fundamentalist "gap theory" to be a compromise against "biblical inerrancy."<sup>140</sup>

One may wonder, is it of any consequence whether a literal fundamentalist believes in YEC or the Gap Theory, or perhaps even a "Day-Age" view, in which each of the six days of creation were each representing "long ages" of geologic time.<sup>141</sup> It is interesting that the National Center for Science Education, a secular advocate for science education, accurately portrays the conflict between these three primary creationist viewpoints:

*There are three major types of creationism espoused by fundamentalist antievolutionists[...] "(S)trict" young-Earth Flood geology creation is the best known—indeed, it is often assumed that all creationists are of this type... It takes, however, an extremely stubborn faith to maintain belief in strict young-Earth creation in the face of the overwhelming—and still increasing—scientific evidence of the great age of Earth and the universe (not to mention the difficulty of interpreting all geology in terms of a single, recent flood). ()*

*Because of the obvious difficulties of the extreme young-Earth Flood geology position, many creationists hold one of the two other main positions: "day-age" or "gap theory" creationism. **These allow the faithful to maintain belief in supernatural creation and the falsity of evolution but also allow for indefinitely long ages—either during (in between) the six days of creation or before.[...]***

*"Day-age" creationism takes a simple approach: the six "days" of creation were not literal twenty-four-hour days but, rather, long ages. [...] The advantages of this interpretation are obvious: each creation "day" can be made as long as necessary, and the successive appearance of forms of life in the fossil record millions of years apart presents no problem—as long as these can all be interpreted as occurring in the same order as the sequence of events described in the six "days" of Genesis. (And this latter point does involve some stubborn difficulties. To mention [one]: plants are created on the third day, although the sun is not created until the following "day"—millions of years later [...].)*

*The "gap theory," also known as the "ruin-restitution" theory, preserves the literal, recent six twenty-four-hour-day creation but assumes that the vast ages so well attested to by science occurred prior to this set of events. In other words, **Earth—and life—was created before the***

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<sup>140</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Answers\\_in\\_Genesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Answers_in_Genesis)

<sup>141</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day-age\\_creationism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day-age_creationism)

**creation week of Genesis.** This exegesis is accomplished by postulating a tremendous "gap" between the very first two verses of Genesis, into which go all the geological ages. [...]

*The universe—heaven and Earth—was originally ("in the beginning") created aeons ago; life flourished for millions or billions of years. [...] Earth became "without form and void" [...] The familiar six-day creation—a re-creation really—then followed, mere thousands of years ago, upon the ruin and chaos of this ancient former world.*

*Gap theory advocates, by this maneuver, **are able to reconcile the scientific evidence for an old Earth and universe and for life itself.** They, just as much as the young-Earth creationists, reject evolution; to them, the re-creation six thousand or so years ago was not entirely ex nihilo (although humans may have been created out of nothing) but was certainly by divine fiat. Therefore, although they differ markedly from "strict" creationists regarding the age of Earth, their antievolution attitudes and arguments are virtually identical. [...]*

*Because gap theory creationism has received little attention compared to young-Earth creationism, and because its proponents tend to use the same anti-evolution arguments anyway, many critics of creationism are not aware of its existence or are confused about what it claims. [...]*

*Young-Earth, gap, and day-age proponents may all use the same anti-evolution arguments, and many of their followers may not care about the subtle differences in doctrine, but all see the rival creationist theories as very nearly as dangerous as evolution. **Young-earthers think that the gap theory leads to heresy, apostasy, and eventual surrender to evolution; gap theorists think that to insist upon a recent ex nihilo creation is so unscientific that it threatens to make the whole idea of creation seem ridiculous and unworthy of consideration.***<sup>142</sup>

Regarding the three creationist positions, the NCSE, while obviously rejecting creationism out-of-hand, is most sympathetic towards the gap-theory for its acceptance of new scientific discovery:

*The gap theory became increasingly attractive during the end of the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century, as the new scientific discipline of geology made it increasingly obvious that Earth was far older than a straightforward, literal interpretation of Genesis and the Bible-based Flood geology would allow. The gap theory provided an attractive escape from this dilemma, allowing religious geologists to preserve both their faith in the Bible and in the new authority of science, which, according to the doctrine of natural theology, **was now considered a second revelation—God's word in nature as well as in scripture.** The*

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<sup>142</sup> Tom McIver, *Creation/Evolution Journal*, Vol 8, No. 3, Fall 1988, <https://ncse.ngo/formless-and-void-gap-theory-creationism>

*two revelations could not contradict each other; some means of reconciliation had to be found... (M)ost geologists of this era were good Christian believers who were convinced that God's truth was discoverable in nature.*

Notable Gap proponents over the years, in addition to Scofield, have included W. D. Conybeare (coauthor of *Outlines of the Geology of England and Wales*), G. H. Pember (author of *Earth's Earliest Ages*), Watchman Nee (*The Mystery of Creation*), Arthur Pink (*Gleanings in Genesis*), Finis Jennings Dake (*Dake Annotated Reference Bible*), L. Allen Higley (*Science and Truth*), Arthur C. Custance (*Without Form and Void: A Study of the Meaning of Genesis 1:2*) and M. R. DeHaan (*Genesis and Evolution*), among others.

Despite young-earthers' unfounded fear that a belief in the gap theory "leads to... eventual surrender to evolution," the champions of gap theory were and are staunch anti-evolutionists and pro-scientific inquiry. Today, in contrast to the science denial of Morris' CRS and ICR and Ken Ham's *Answers in Genesis*, there is a thriving search within science itself by capable scientists of the evidence of intelligent design manifested in living organisms. And where there is intelligent design, there is *prima facie* evidence of an Intelligent Designer. As more information is discovered and investigative processes more sophisticated relative to the study of DNA sequencing, the theory of evolution seems to become even more implausible as an explanation for the origin of the variety and complexity of living organisms.

Stephen C. Meyer's publication, *Scientific Evidence For a Creator*, found at the website [discovery.org](http://discovery.org), explores the cutting-edge discoveries made by biologists, physicists, and genetic DNA scientists, that present compelling evidence in virtually every field of scientific inquiry of an intelligent design setting in place the origin of the physical universe, including "the origin of the simplest living cell." As director of the Center for Science and Culture at the Discovery Institute in Seattle, Meyer does not shrink from scientific study, he dives deep into the evidence, as at every turn, it becomes more and more evident that **"since the creation of the world (God's) invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made."**

The Discovery Institute's *Evolution News & Science Today* website ([evolutionnews.org](http://evolutionnews.org)) encourages scientists to "comment on developments in their own field, but, as appropriate, ... to comment on other fields in an interdisciplinary spirit. All published writing is expected to meet high standards of factual accuracy, balance, fairness, clarity, and timeliness." As new discoveries in fields of paleontology, evolutionary biology, and micro-biology are uncovered, the evidence of Intelligent Design becomes even stronger.

Rather than scoff and ridicule legitimate scientists, we should challenge them to consider the ramifications of their own discoveries, and to fully engage ourselves in the study of all the sciences. Only then will Christians prove they truly believe the witness of God's own handiwork, as it "pours forth (its) speech." The truth of God's Works is found in His Creation.

# Six Works of God

## Conclusion

*“Say to God, ‘How awesome are Thy Works!’”* Psalm 66:3

A consistent premise of this study is that each major Work of God is manifested over three events, beginning with his Work of Creation – in the beginning, at the six days of re-creating the modern world, and at the end, with the creating of a new heaven and a new earth. And just as God worked six days, and rested on the seventh, so there are six major works presented in this study:

### ***Coming, Calling, Cleansing, Collecting, Constructing, Creating***

#### **The Work of Christ’s Coming:**

First to Redeem, Second to Rapture, Third to Recompense

#### **The Work of Christ’s Calling the Righteous Dead out of the Grave:**

First Christ’s own resurrection, then those who are His at His coming, and then at the end, when the kingdom is set up

#### **The Work of Christ’s Cleansing of the Righteous:**

The Bath of Salvation, The Footwashing of Fellowship, the Purification unto Glory

#### **The Work of Collecting Israel Back to the Land:**

From Egypt, from Babylon, from all the world

#### **The Work of Constructing the Temple:**

First Moses/Solomon’s, Second Zerubbabel/Herod’s, Third the Tribulation/Kingdom Temple

#### **The Work of Creating the Heavens and the Earth:**

First in the beginning, Second the Modern World, Third the New Heavens and the New Earth

Hopefully this study of God’s Works has been encouraging and edifying, as we seek to learn the words of knowledge, according to His will: “Apply your heart to discipline, and your ears to words of knowledge,” Proverbs 23:12.