



THE TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD

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THE TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD

*“Know ye therefore that they which are of faith,
the same are the children of Abraham.” – Galatians 3:7*

1. Abraham’s Spiritual Seed

BASED upon the clear teachings of God’s holy, inerrant, unbroken, verbally inspired Word, our purpose in this study on THE TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD is to show that the Scriptures teach in clear, bold, unmistakable truths, that all believers, God’s children by the new birth, are the true Israel of God; and that they, and they alone, are God’s chosen people upon the earth today and are the present heirs of the promises made to Abraham and his seed in Christ.

We will also be setting forth that the physical nation of Israel in the land of Palestine in the Near East today, is not God’s chosen people or nation after the flesh, and neither will they ever again be dealt with as a nation in a so-called 1000-years of earthly prosperity, with Christ sitting upon an earthly throne in Jerusalem. No, the Scriptures plainly teach that the nation of Israel was set aside at Calvary and that God’s dealing with them now is the same as His dealings with the Gentiles: “For there is no respect of persons with God [there is no difference between Jew and Gentile]...for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 2:11; 3:22, 23).

This precious truth of true believers being the true Israel of God has been lost among the false teaching of the past 150 years. This false teaching says that God will yet deal with Israel as a nation, His chosen nation, and that most all of the promises of the Old Testament given to Israel are physical promises and not spiritual, and that the Jew will again arise as the chosen people of God in a so-called 1000-year reign of Christ upon this earth.

As I have studied this subject in the past years, I have been greatly blessed to see my spiritual position in Christ, based upon His election of grace, and how that I, as a child of God, am an heir of Abraham and the promises made to him in Christ as his seed. My one desire therefore in setting forth these truths is to magnify my risen, exalted Lord Jesus Christ who sits upon His throne in heaven now, ruling over His people and over all of the inhabitants of this earth. “All power [all authority] is given unto me [Christ] in heaven and in earth” (Mat 28:18). “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1Pe 3:22). For God has set Christ “at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this

world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:20-23). We will seek to show from God’s Word that our Lord Jesus Christ is now King of kings and Lord of lords and that He already sits upon David’s throne in the heavenlies.

Another desire in this present study is that the Holy Spirit will be pleased to open the eyes of His people to let them see the vast array of precious promises which are theirs as the spiritual seed of Abraham; and that they will feed and live upon these promises as they wait for the Lord from heaven.

Also, my prayer is that when we have seen this gracious truth, we will no longer hold out any false hope to the Jews that they are the chosen nation of God, but that through repentance and faith they must have a present hope in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God—a hope, I say, in His shed blood and righteousness as their only means of approach unto God and entrance into heaven: “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom 2:28, 29). These Scriptures teach that only a work of grace wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit will prepare a man for heaven, Jew or Gentile; and that the true Jew is one who has been born again.

Now with your Bible in hand, let us see what the Word of God teaches upon this subject. “To the law and to the testimony” (Isa 8:20)—What saith the Scripture? First, there is one Scriptural truth that must be kept in mind and it is this: the Scriptures teach that in all of God’s dealings with mankind from the time of Adam we may discern the same principle at work: namely, “First the natural, then the spiritual” (1Co 15:45, 46). God had progressively revealed His purpose through, first, His dealings with the natural Israel; second and finally, His dealings with spiritual Israel. There is no Scriptural basis for the regressive idea that God’s dealings will again be centered exclusively on natural Israel at some future date, this would be going from natural to spiritual and back to natural again. If you will check your Bible you will find that the writers of the New Testament did not violate this principle of God, for in relating over 100 Scriptures from the Old Testament they always gave them a Spiritual meaning and applied them to spiritual Israel, the Church, the born-again believers of all ages.

Now let us proceed. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul said that the revelation God gave him about the church unlocked a mystery which had been hidden in God since the beginning of the world, namely, that all of God’s people, whether Jews or Gentiles by natural descent, were to be members of the same body (Eph 3:5, 6, 9).

To Paul it was revealed that it was God’s eternal plan to have, not a small nation of His own, but a worldwide body of His people drawn from all “nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues” (Rev 7:9). This was the great and wonderful “mystery of Christ” (Eph 3:4) that Paul and the other New Testament writers came to understand and to preach.

The apostle said that in time past the Gentiles were “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having

no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). But now God was freely offering His unsearchable riches (Eph 3:8) to people of all nations without requiring a change in their natural citizenship. Gentiles who had been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel were now, in Christ, “no more foreigners, but fellow citizens” with the new and spiritual Israel. Those who had been strangers were now, in Christ, “no more strangers...but members of the household of God” (Eph 2:19).

So the commonwealth of Israel, the family and household of God, now contains both Jew and Gentile. Paul argued that this family and household was made up of only those who believed in Christ as their Lord and Savior. Those who were citizens of the Israel of Old, but who had not received Christ, were simply unsaved members of one of the many nations of the world. Thus, he said: “They are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom 9:6) and those who were not, he termed “Israel after the flesh” (1Co 10:18).

Also, when we look into Galatians, we find the apostle Paul again dealing with this great subject of Abraham’s seed, the true Israel of God. There had come among the believers at Galatia the Judaizers, who were teaching that a man could not be saved except he became a Jew outwardly, by circumcision of the flesh. Therefore, the grace of God had been perverted by these Jews who would not bow to the authority of God’s Word, that is, the truth that He was through with physical Israel as a nation. They took pride in the fact that they were the physical descendants of Abraham, and because of this, they were more favored than the Christians. So Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote this letter to refute this false teaching.

In chapter one he calls it “another gospel,” which teaches that a man has certain advantages in the flesh because he was born a physical descendant of Abraham. In chapter two he states emphatically that a man is not justified before God on the basis of law-works (anything after the flesh), but justification comes only by the faith of Christ as he looks away from all merit and trusts his never-dying soul into the hands of the Lord Jesus, on the basis of His cross-work and His resurrection.

In chapter three Paul said that Abraham’s standing with God came by grace, through faith, and that Abraham was saved by the same gospel that is preached today (verse 8). He states that Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness” (vs. 6 & Rom 4:3). Also, he said that Abraham’s children are only those people who are saved by the gospel: “They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (vs. 7).

Therefore believers alone are the true descendants and offspring of Abraham. Natural descent is meaningless. To be a child of Abraham and the true Israel of God, we must “walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham” (Rom 4:12). Abraham and his God-fearing descendants in those years before Christ, looked forward by faith to the coming of Christ; and all of those who today would be God’s children must look back by faith to that same event and to that same person of Christ.

So it matters not from which nation we came, for God “preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall *all nations* be blessed” (Gal 3:8). Therefore those of every nation who avail themselves of the truth of the gospel become the children of Abraham, the children of God. There is no other way, “for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26).

Also in this third chapter, we note that the promises were made to Abraham and his seed. And who is the seed? “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ” (vs. 16). So if Christ is the Seed, then all who are in Him are included: “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (vs. 29).

Dear friend, I ask you this, are you Christ’s? Have you been born again from above? Have you committed your life to Him? If you have, then you are the seed of Abraham, a Jew, which is one inwardly (Rom 2:29), and an heir with your fellow believers of all the Old Testament promises.

Further proof of this great truth is found in Romans 4:13-17. “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith...it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations).”

Nothing could be plainer than this truth—that only they who are in Christ are in Abraham, and therefore are partakers of the Old Testament promises.

“They are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed” (Rom 9:6-8). “The flesh profiteth nothing, it is the Spirit that quickeneth” (Joh 6:63). “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1Co 2:14).

The plain Word of God is not to be argued with. These verses tell us that the natural descendants of Abraham after the flesh are not the children of God. Therefore twentieth century Israel is not the chosen nation of God; they cannot be, for they have rejected Christ as their Messiah, just like the 1st century did. They abide under the curse of God as unbelievers. The only chosen nation today are both Jews and Gentiles who have been born again by the Spirit of God and have availed themselves of the blessings of the gospel of the grace of God in Christ. These only “are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” (1Pe 2:9).

2. Christ and the New Covenant

It was revealed unto the Apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit that God’s purpose from eternity was to have a chosen people upon this earth at all times until the Lord’s return, and that this would be both Jews and Gentiles brought into one body, the church, of which Christ was the head: “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him” (Eph 1:9, 10). He continues to show that the middle wall of partition had been broken down between Jew and Gentile, the

enmity between them abolished, and that they had, by the grace of God through the atoning work of Christ, been made one in Him, and thereby composed the true Israel of God (2:14, 15). He adds that God's purpose was "that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (3:5, 6)—the same as the Jews, thus making the true Israel of God those who had been made new creatures in Christ Jesus by the new birth and who were now spiritual Israel.

Now turning to the fourth chapter of Galatians, verses 21-31 bring before us Abraham's two sons. The one was by the bondwoman, Hagar, born after the flesh; the other by a freewoman, Sarah, born by promise. The story shows in an allegory the difference between unbelieving "Israel after the flesh," and those of all nations who know Christ, who have yielded to His claims, and thereby have been made free. The apostle shows that the son of the bondwoman pictures the children of "Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children," while the son of the freewoman pictures the church: "Jerusalem which is above," which is free and "is the mother of us all."

Thus Paul teaches that believers, as Isaac was, are the children of promise; but with respect to the unbelieving children of the flesh, the Scriptures say: "Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman" (Gal 4:30). In other words, as far as God's eternal purpose is concerned; cast out, remove from consideration the physical, political nation of Israel and her unsaved citizens; for the inheritance belongs to spiritual Israel and not to natural Israel. Paul closes that 4th chapter with these gracious words: "So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman," for the flesh profits nothing, "but of the free," because Christ has made us free in Him.

So we see then, that now and forever it is only of believers that it can be said: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom 8:14), and "the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:16, 17). "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal 6:15, 16). To be a child of God, and of the true Israel of God, we can be so only by being a new creation in Christ.

After Paul spent one whole letter showing that Israel after the flesh is nothing, that only new creations in Christ avail, that these Judaizers profit nothing, that God now deals with His true Israel, the spiritual seed of Abraham—then he says: "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (6:17). He is saying: I bear in my heart the mark of circumcision by the Spirit, and in my body the marks of the sufferings for the cause of Christ, as I have been persecuted by the Jews, the children of Abraham born after the flesh; so never speak to me again that Israel after the flesh is God's chosen people, for they are not.

Now in the book of Hebrews we see this same truth illustrated over and over again: the truth that God has done away with the types and the shadows—also the physical things of Israel, which stood for a time, but have now given way to the spiritual realities as found in Christ. Since this has been accomplished by God in Christ, then to go back to

an earthly temple, an earthly altar, an earthly priesthood, an earthly tabernacle, earthly animal sacrifices, an earthly covenant, an earthly throne and an earthly king in a so-called 1000 years of Jewish prosperity with Christ sitting upon an earthly throne in present Jerusalem would be “to turn again to the weak and beggarly elements” (Gal 4:9). It would mean to put to naught this great Book of Hebrews and all its teaching that God in His eternal purpose has a better country, a heavenly, awaiting His people; in fact, better things than all the physical things of this life.

The book of Hebrews, perhaps more than any of the books of the Bible, stands as a source of frustration and embarrassment to those who teach that God plans to return one day to the natural trappings of the old Jewish economy, to the natural land and city, the natural law and ordinances, the natural kingdom and throne, and the natural temple and sacrifices.

The Holy Spirit through the writer of Hebrews shows the overwhelming superiority of the new and better age that dawned at Calvary. He shows that after Calvary the natural types and figures had served their purpose and were vanishing away, having been replaced forever by the eternal and spiritual realities (Heb 8:13).

Note the word “better” as used in Hebrews. Did the Israelites’ fathers hear the voice of the prophets? We, the true spiritual Israel, hear the “better” voice of God’s Son (1:1, 2). Did the Israelites have a high priest after the Levitical order? We have a “better” One after the “better” and undying order of Melchisedec (6:20-7:28). Did they seek, unsuccessfully, for perfection through the law? We have a “better” hope through the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (7:19). Did they have an earthly sanctuary with a candlestick, table and shewbread, and a tabernacle with the golden censer, the ark, and the mercy seat (9:1-5)? We have Christ: “a greater and more perfect tabernacle” (9:11). Did they have the blood of bulls and goats that could not take away sins (10:4)? We have the incomparably “better” “blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God” (9:14). Did the Israelites receive an earthly land? We have “a better country, that is, an heavenly” (11:16). Did they come to a mount that could be touched (12:18)? We have come to the “better” Mount Zion (12:22). Did they have the natural city of Jerusalem? We have the incomparably “better” “city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (12:22). To go further, we as spiritual Israel have a “better” covenant, the New Covenant, that was foretold by the Prophets, and since Calvary, has forever replaced the old and faulty covenant (8:10) that existed between God and Israel. The New Covenant is the covenant of which Jeremiah prophesied, and that was fulfilled once for all, for both Jews and Gentiles, at the first coming of Christ. The New Covenant that God has made with the new Israel is “not according to the covenant” that he made with natural Israel, which “covenant they broke” (Jer 31:32). “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel...I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people...they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest” (vv 33, 34).

The prophet Ezekiel expressed it in these words: “I will make a covenant of peace with them: it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle

also shall be with them: Yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Ezek 37:26, 27).

In two places in Hebrews (8:6-13; 10:16, 17), these prophecies are quoted as referring to the new spiritual Israel, the true Israel of God. These verses show this “better” covenant was already established in the first century, and that the old one even then was decaying and getting old, and was ready to vanish away. Not long after the writing of Hebrews, the temple rituals and sacrifices, the proudest features of the old covenant relationship, vanished completely as the city of Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Romans.

In 2 Corinthians, the Old Covenant made with the Jews, which they did not keep, is called: “the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones...the ministration of condemnation” (3:7, 9). The New Covenant, however, is called: “the ministration of the spirit” (3:6). The glory of the Old Covenant, as once reflected in the face of Moses “was to be done away” (3:7), and was to be replaced by the new covenant that would “exceed in glory” (3:9). We draw this conclusion: the New Covenant had forever replaced the old covenant in these words: “For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious” (3:11).

Since Calvary, and forever, the New Covenant is God’s only covenant with man, and it is based upon the “better” promises of the crucified, buried, risen, exalted Lord Jesus Christ. Its inauguration was announced by Christ on the night in which He was betrayed when, “he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament [covenant], which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mat 26:27, 28). This covenant relationship with God, through the blood of Christ, is offered to as many as receive Him (Joh 1:12) prior to His Second Coming. There will be no opportunity after His coming, for then comes the White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20.

This covenant is the covenant of grace and therefore is based upon the operation of our Triune God by His Spirit working in the hearts of both Jew and Gentile, to call out a bride for Christ who is the Head of the spiritual race called—the true Israel of God.

One other thought on the book of Hebrews: it was written to show that Christ our Lord, God manifested in the flesh, is far greater and “better” than all creatures and things. In chapter one, He is spoken of as being “better” than the angels. In chapter two He is shown to be greater and “better” than man. In chapter three He is spoken of as “better” and greater than Moses. In chapter four, “better” and greater than Joshua. In chapters 5, 6, & 7, He is shown as the Great High Priest, “better” than the priesthood of Aaron. In chapter 8, He is as the One who “obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” In chapter 9, our Lord Jesus is shown to be greater than all the sacrifices, greater than the tabernacle and its ministry, and that He is the one great offering made for His people, the true Israel of God.

“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy

place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb 9:11-14). We see then that Christ the Mediator of the New Covenant is "better" and far greater than all, and therefore He has a name which is above every name. Also His work is complete: "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified...We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all" (10:10, 14).

This shows us that in Christ Jesus, the true Israel of God, made up of believers, born again by His Spirit, need no future earthy altar, temple, sacrifice or throne because we are forever complete in Christ by His "once for all" salvation which He finished at Calvary.

3. Jesus Christ Rules on David's Eternal Throne

OUR Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is now sitting upon David's throne in the heavenlies, and those who are of the true Israel of God, are ruling and reigning with Him as children of the kingdom. This is what we shall consider in this section.

The angel Gabriel was sent of God to proclaim the gracious news to the virgin Mary that she was to be the mother of the Messiah: "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luk 1:30-33).

We know from the words of our Lord Himself as He stood before Pilate that the kingdom over which He would rule was not an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual: "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). And as the Amplified puts it: "My kingdom [kingly, royal power] belongs not to this world, has no such origin or source here." This to me is very emphatic that our Lord never came to set up an earthly kingdom, and it has never been in His eternal purpose to do so.

In Peter's message on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, preaching under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he said that the prophecy of Christ sitting upon David's throne had been fulfilled. He said that Christ, then and there, was ruling and reigning upon the spiritual throne of David in the heavenlies. "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up,

whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:29-36).

This states without contradiction, that the physical throne of David was a type and shadow of the spiritual throne of the greater David, the Lord Jesus Christ, and this throne is an everlasting throne, not an earthly throne for just 1000 years.

Every promise in the Old Testament where the future throne of David is mentioned (2Sa 7:16; Psa 89:3, 4; Isa 9:6, 7; 55:3; Jer 33:20, 21), and every Scripture in the New Testament confirms Peter’s statement of Christ ruling and reigning upon David’s spiritual throne in heaven.

Let us look at a few of these in the New Testament. In Acts 5:31 we read: “Him [Christ] hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour.” “By the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1Pe 3:21, 22). “Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Phi 2:9-11). “Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph 1:20-23). “All power [all authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mat 28:18). We have the complete picture of Christ ruling and reigning as Lord, as King over His people.

Having established the fact that Christ, the seed and offspring of David after the flesh, sits upon the throne of David in heaven, let us look at the promise made to David that his throne would be established for ever. This is set forth in 2 Samuel 7:16, “And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.” In verse 12 we see the promises were to be fulfilled through David’s seed, and the Seed is Christ, “which was made of the seed of David” (Rom 1:3).

God promised that the seed of David would “build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever” (2Sa 7:13). The natural fulfillment of that promise came about when David’s son, Solomon, built the first temple in Israel, but of course, disobedience caused Solomon’s temple, throne and kingdom to crumble and disappear rather than survive for ever. The complete fulfillment of the promises to David occurred after Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension (Act 2:29-36).

We see then, that the house or temple which Solomon built for God’s name was a natural type of the greater spiritual house of God, the church, true Israel—which was, and is, built by One “greater than Solomon” (Luk 11:31). Christ said: “I will build my

church” (Mat 16:18); and for more than 19 centuries He has been doing exactly that, thus fulfilling God’s promise that the seed would “build an house for my name” (Eph 2:19-22).

It is clear from Scripture that all the promises made to David have been fulfilled in Christ, and that Christ Jesus our Lord rules and reigns now upon His throne, which fulfills Gabriel’s words in Luke 1:32, 33: “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob [over those who have the God of Jacob for their refuge, Psalm 46:7,11] for ever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end.”

Our Lord, in the parable given in Luke 19:12-27, says in verse 12, “A certain nobleman went into the far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.” Here He was speaking of Himself, as He did receive this kingdom over which He rules and reigns. “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet” (1Co 15:24-27).

These Scriptures agree with all that we are speaking of, for we are told here that our blessed Lord did receive a kingdom when He went back to glory. He did rule from heaven sitting upon David’s spiritual throne and, praise His holy name, He still rules. God the Father gave Him this kingdom and He will reign until all things are put under His feet, even death (Eph 1:22, 1Co 15:26).

But notice, in these verses there is no time, no seven years, no thousand years, between 1 Corinthians 15:23 and 24. In verse 23, Christ is spoken of as the firstfruits of the resurrection. This was when He arose from the dead and went back to glory to receive His kingdom, to sit upon His throne and send the love-gift of His Spirit to His church as His reward for paying their sin-debt in full, to equip His church for its task in the world, and to fill His people with his Spirit as their indwelling salvation. It is stated further in that 23rd verse: “Afterward, they that are Christ’s at his coming.” Here we have His Second Coming, that blessed hope of the true Israel of God, His church, when He shall come for them and “we shall for ever be with the Lord” (1Th 4:17). Notice verse 24: “*Then* cometh the end.” There is no mention of any time period between our Lord’s Second Coming and the end of this age when He shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father. Why? Because there is none, and the rest of the New Testament agrees with this (Act 3:19-21, Joh 5:28, 29).

The Greek word here denotes sequence of time: “then,” next. What is the next order of events; it is the end of this age when Christ’s work as Mediator will be brought to an end and He delivers up the kingdom to the Father. Acts 3:19-21, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive [hold, retain] until the times of restitution of all things [until the final recovery of all things from sin which requires His office of Mediator], which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

If you would carefully study the following Scriptures, you would note that all refer to the same Person and the same event, the Second Coming of Christ; and all of these are associated with the resurrection and the end of all things, for certainly there can be nothing beyond the last day and the last hour:

The last day (Joh 6:39, 40, 44, 54)
The day of the Lord (Act 2:20; 1Th 5:2; 2Pe 3:10)
The day of the Lord Jesus (1Co 5:5; 2Co 1:14)
The day of the Lord Jesus Christ (1Co 1:8)
The day of Jesus Christ (Phi 1:6)
The day of Christ (Phi 1:10; 2:16; 2Th 2:2)
The day of God (2Pe 3:12; Rev 16:14)
That day(Mat 7:22; 24:36; 26:29; Luk10:12; 2Th 1:10; 2Ti 1:12, 18)
In the day (Rom 2:16)
His day (Luk 17:24)
The revelation of Christ (2Th 1:7)
The appearing of Christ (1Ti 6:14; 1Pe 1:7)
The coming of Christ (1Co 15:23; 1Th 2:19; Jam 5:7)
That hour (Mat 24:36, 42; 25:13; Mar 13:32)
An hour (Luk 12:40, 46)
The hour (Joh 5:28)
What hour (Rev 3:3).

Let us go further. The kingdom of God is not a natural, earthly, political kingdom that will be established at some uncertain date in a little country in the Near East. No, it is a present, eternal, universal, immovable and spiritual kingdom. Taken in its proper context, the Greek word translated “kingdom” in the New Testament does not mean a physical kingdom with a specific and limited location; it means the rule or reign or authority of God in the hearts and lives of His people, His church, the true Israel of God.

Again repeating what we said earlier: 1 Corinthians 15:45 and 46 teaches that God has always worked on the principle of “first the natural, then the spiritual.” Here in regard to the kingdom of David and his seed, the greater David, this holds true. The kingdom of David, king of Israel, was a natural kingdom; the kingdom of God, manifested by Christ, the greater David, is a spiritual kingdom. It is the Lordship of Christ in the hearts of His people; it is His authority guiding and directing their lives. You see, when we read the words, “the kingdom of God,” we should read them as “the authority of God” or “the Lordship of God.”

Let us illustrate again by comparison. The kingdom of David was a kingdom of physical things like meat and drink, but the kingdom of God, the Lordship or authority of God, is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17). The kingdom of David was a visible kingdom; it could be seen and observed. But, “the kingdom of God cometh not with observation...for, behold, the kingdom of God [the Lordship or authority of God] is within you” (Luk 17:20, 21).

The kingdom of David was a kingdom of this world, but the kingdom of God, the Lordship or authority of God, “is not of this world” (Joh 18:36).

You could see the kingdom of David from adjoining countries and enter it by crossing its boundaries, but “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God [the Lordship or authority of God]...except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God [the Lordship or authority of God]” (Joh 3:3,5).

All of this proves to me that the dispensationalist theory, that Christ came to re-establish the old Davidic kingdom at His first coming, and thereby bring “good government” to the world is all wrong. It is equally wrong to believe that He will come a second time to rule with a “literal” rod of iron and to reform society by enforcing high moral and ethical standards that the world otherwise was, and is, unwilling to obey. Our Lord said Himself in Mark 10:43 that enforced government is not God’s way, but man’s way of rule. His way is working quietly in the hearts of His people by His Holy Spirit—drawing them into His kingdom with cords of love, making them willing to bow at His feet in humble confession and repentance, and taking His yoke upon them as an act of faith and obedience. Why? because they are His sheep, whom He knows and calls by their names.

Also being a spiritual kingdom, the King who rules over it sits upon a throne that is “for ever and ever,” and has a “scepter of righteousness” (Heb 1:8); He is crowned with glory and honor (Heb 2:9); He is the “King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God” and to Him belongs “honor and glory for ever and ever” (1Ti 1:17); He is a priestly King “after the order of Melchisedec...King of righteousness, and King of peace” (Heb 6:20-7:2). Also, He is King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev 17:14).

Again the Scriptures picture Christ as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” (Rev 5:5), who has chosen and continues to call out “a kingdom of priests” (1Pe 2:9; Rev 1:6; 5:10) to “show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1Pe 2:9). These people, the church, the true Israel of God, “have been translated into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col 1:13) and according to Romans 5:17, they reign in this life with Him. How? by His power given unto them. They reign over sin, the world, their circumstances, pain, adversity, tragedy and even death itself. They are “more than conquerors through him that loved them” (Rom 8:37).

Yes, the true Israel of God sings praises unto Him that sits upon the throne saying: “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev 5:9, 10). Yes, we do reign and as we reign we shout with all the redeemed of all ages who make up the true Israel of God: “Alleluia, salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God...For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev 19:1, 6).

4. The Kingdom of God

The kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of our Lord is one and the same kingdom. This kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. It means the rule, the authority, the supremacy of Christ, in the hearts of men—those who have entered into it by the new birth.

Let us go to the Gospel of Luke and see how the expression “The kingdom of God” is used; and to the Gospel of Matthew to see that “the kingdom of heaven” is used synonymously. These terms mean the same thing. In the Gospel of Luke, the expression “the kingdom of God” is used in five different ways to show us its full meaning. It is God’s kingship; it is His rule or sovereignty, recognized in the hearts and operative in the lives of His people, and effecting their complete salvation. Now watch as this unfolds to us according to the Gospel of Luke.

First, Luke speaks about *preaching or proclaiming* the kingdom of God. “Christ said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent” (Luk 4:43). “And it came to pass afterward, that Christ went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God” (Luk 8:1; cf. Luk 9:2, 60; 16:16). This truth of preaching the present rule and reign of God in the hearts of men was preaching the gospel as set forth in Mark 1:14, 15 in these words: “And Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

Our Lord was not preaching that He had come to set up an earthly, material, physical kingdom, but that He had come, commissioned by God the Father, to establish a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of His people, and that this would be accomplished by the gracious gospel of the grace of God toward poor hell-deserving sinners who would repent and believe Him as the King, the Messiah, the One sent down from heaven, the Saviour, God’s substitute for sinners.

Second, Luke speaks about *entering* the kingdom of God. In Luke 18:24, 25 we read, when Jesus saw that the rich young ruler was sad and sorrowful, He said, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God? For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Listen now as our Lord clarifies this for us! The only way in which we can enter into the kingdom of God is recorded in John 3:3, 5 in these words by our Blessed Lord: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” So this rules out any one entering into this kingdom of God except by the new birth, by the direct generating power of the Spirit of God upon the heart, making that individual a new creature and giving him a new heart and nature over which Christ rules as King.

The apostle Paul records: “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (1Co 15:50). This rules out then a fleshly kingdom, a material kingdom of a thousand years here on earth. You see, our friends who claim that there will be an earthly kingdom made up of the Jew after the flesh, and of the nations of the earth who somehow miraculously come through a so-called battle of Armageddon, cannot get around this Scripture, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

This same truth is seen here: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor adulterers...nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the

kingdom of God” (1Co 6:9, 10). Again we see that only by the new birth can you enter the kingdom of God, whether you be Jew or Gentile. “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1Co 6:11). So we see again that, by the expression, “the kingdom of God,” is meant a spiritual kingdom—and only we who are made holy in Christ shall enter into it.

“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph 5:5). Besides proving again that no unsaved soul is in the kingdom of God, and that it is a spiritual kingdom, we also have written for us very plainly that the kingdom of God and of Christ is the same kingdom. This Scripture should for ever shut the mouths of those who claim that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ are two different kingdoms. No, they are one and the same; call it what you will: the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, or the kingdom of our Lord; it is a spiritual kingdom.

Thirdly, Luke says about the kingdom of God: “Seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Luk 12:31). “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat 6:33). Here we are shown the *necessity of seeking* the kingdom of God. When? “I have heard thee in a time accepted and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2Co 6:2). You see, the kingdom of God, His rule over your heart and life in salvation, is to be sought *now*, because when Christ comes, that ends it all. Then it will be too late, for there will be no second chance. Why? for then the day of judgment will be ushered in (Joh 5:28, 29).

Let me cry aloud against this teaching that speaks of a chance after Christ comes, a chance for me to be saved in a so-called seven year tribulation period and 1000-year reign of Christ upon the earth. This is false! The Scripture knows nothing about this. The parable of the ten virgins, as well as the rest of the New Testament, teaches that when Christ comes the door will be shut; therefore we are told to watch, for it will be all over. “And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and *the door was shut*. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh” (Mat 25:10-13).

Fourthly, Luke says the kingdom of God is *spiritual; it is within us*. “And when Christ was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luk 17:20, 21). What is the meaning of these verses? The Pharisees and their many followers were looking forward to the arrival of an outward, earthly, visible kingdom, one in which the Jews would occupy a very prominent place. They were hardly able to wait for its arrival. So anxious were they to know when it would be established that they were willing to obtain information from anyone, even Jesus, their enemy.

Our Lord Jesus, however, in His answer told them that they had a misconception concerning the nature of the kingdom, as if it would arrive with loud proclamation, prancing horses, marching armies, parading bands, with “outward show.” If that were true, He said, then people would be greeting its arrival by shouting, “Here it is” or “There it is.” But our Lord declared that the kingdom, or Lordship, reign or rule of God, is basically spiritual in its essence. It is written inside a person. For you see, wherever God is truly recognized and honored as King, there one finds His kingdom and kingship.

Let me repeat it again: the kingdom of God and His Christ consist of inner qualities such as “righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). These qualities exist wherever God is recognized as King. The same mistake is being made today: man is looking for an outward kingdom, but he is just as deceived as the first century Jews. If Christ had intended to set up an earthly kingdom of pomp and splendor, He would have gladly let His followers crown Him king, which they desired to do. But He would not: “When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone” (Joh 6:15).

Fifthly, although our Lord Jesus had spoken about His spiritual entrance into hearts and lives, that is, about God’s spiritual kingdom or Lordship, He never denies that there will be also a glorious visible manifestation of God’s kingdom at His Second Coming, for *He speaks of His kingdom as yet in the future*: “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourself thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God” (Luk 13:28, 29). Also, “Fear not, little flock: for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luk 12:32).

Yes, there shall be a manifestation of this glorious kingdom when the Lord Jesus Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father (1Co 15:24) and confess our names before Him in heaven; and we shall be in that eternal state of happiness and bliss with our new bodies made in the likeness of our Blessed Lord who bought us with the price of His own precious blood. Therefore, we look not for a *partial* restoration of this earth in a 1000-year earthly reign of our Lord, but for the *complete* restoration of all things in the eternal state in the new heaven and the new earth. “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2Pe 3:13).

5. The Kingdom of Christ

We proceed in our studies with the expression “The kingdom of God” as found in the New Testament. In its broadest connotation, the term: “the kingdom of God” indicates God’s kingship, rule, or sovereignty, recognized in the hearts and operative in the lives of His people, and effecting their complete salvation. Therefore, our Lord Jesus spoke of salvation as the kingdom or reign of God, in order to indicate the supernatural character, origin, and purpose of our salvation. Remember the salvation that God gives to His

people, to His children, His elect ones, begins in heaven and shall redound to the glory of the Father in heaven.

When we look at Ephesians in this light, we will understand a little of God's purpose: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (1:9, 10). This was God's purpose from eternity, that Christ would have a kingdom, a people made up of both Jews and Gentiles (2:14-17; 3:6); and that Christ would sit at God's own right hand in the heavenlies: "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under Christ's feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (1:20-23).

Also in God's faithfulness that will never be removed (Psa 89:33), He has promised to those who are in Christ's kingdom, the true Israel of God, a life that will never end (Joh 3:16), a spring of water that will never cease to bubble up within the one who drinks it (Joh 4:14), a gift that will never be lost (Joh 6:37, 39), a hand from which the Good Shepherd's sheep will never be snatched (Joh 10:28), a chain that will never be broken (Rom 8:29, 30), a love from which they will never be separated (Rom 8:39), a calling that will never be revoked (Rom 11:29), a foundation that will never be destroyed (2Ti 2:19), and an inheritance that will never fade away, reserved for them in heaven (1Pe 1:4, 5).

All of this is included in the kingdom of God; it is performed by the Holy Spirit in the members of the kingdom who have come under the reign of Christ by His marvelous grace.

Now there are those who would limit the kingdom to a period of 1000 years, place it in the future altogether, and give it a prescribed location on the earth with the Jews being the principle actors and Christ with His disciples sitting on an earthly throne ruling with a rod of iron. They claim that there will be many classes of people in this kingdom: saved people with their new spiritual bodies, saved people with their physical bodies in which sin still dwells, and unsaved rebels who will yet turn on Christ at the end of a so-called golden age.

This is false; it is utter folly, for this is foreign to the teachings of those Scriptures which plainly teach that God's kingdom is eternal. Psalm 145:13, "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." Not only is it eternal, but it is not involved with geography at all. Our Lord said to the Pharisees: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation...behold the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20, 21). It is a thing in us and not outside of us (in pomp and splendor): "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17).

Also the kingdom must be now in God's child, purchased by Christ, for Colossians 1:12, 13 tells us when God saves us we are made "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: and have been delivered from the power of darkness [the spiritual wicked kingdom of Satan] and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son." Yes, this kingdom

is now, established in the hearts of God's children, and Christ has been crowned King and Lord of their lives.

Let us go further. There are those who build much of their argument for an earthly kingdom of 1000 years sometime in the future upon the assumption that the "kingdom of God" as spoken of in Mark, Luke and John, and the "kingdom of heaven" as spoken of in Matthew are two separate kingdoms; the kingdom of God being a heavenly kingdom and the kingdom of heaven being an earthly kingdom. One has God the Father as Ruler; the other has God the Son as Ruler.

But this argument is wrongly dividing of the Word of Truth, because if you will compare them as we are going to do now, you will find that the Scriptures show conclusively that these two terms are used interchangeably. Compare Matthew 11:12 where the expression "the kingdom of heaven" is used, and Luke 16:16 where the expression "the kingdom of God" is used; and you will find they are the same. "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." That's Matthew, now Luke: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." Listen now to a comparison between Matthew 4:17 and Mark 1:14, 15. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And Mark: "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the gospel." Again, listen to a comparison between Matthew 5:3 and Luke 6:20. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now Luke: "Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God." One more will suffice and yet there are many more. Compare Matthew 13:31 with Mark 4:30, 31. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed." Now Mark: "How shall we liken the kingdom of God...it is like a grain of mustard seed."

What do we find then in a comparison of these Scriptures? We find that the inspired writers spoke of the same event; yet one used the term "kingdom of heaven" while the other used the term "kingdom of God." But they both are synonyms, meaning the one kingdom which is spiritual and not earthly (in the sense that Christ would have an earthly kingdom apart from the heavenly kingdom of God).

In Matthew 19:23-24 we find the expressions "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" used in the same illustration by our Lord. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Here again is proof that the expressions are the same.

If as the dispensationalists tell us, that the expression "the kingdom of heaven" means an earthly kingdom over which Christ will rule for 1000 years and the nations of the earth enter into this kingdom after the so-called tribulation period by virtue of their friendliness to the Jew (and they give Matthew 25:31-40 as proof of this), then we need some explanation of the following verses wherein the expression "the kingdom of heaven" is used in the book of Matthew. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the right-

eousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 5:20). This verse then excludes from this kingdom all those who do not have a righteousness that is better than the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and the Scriptures speak of only one righteousness that does this and that is the righteousness of Christ which is imputed to every child of God in the new birth. So this leaves out all unsaved souls.

Matthew 7:21, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Here again all are excluded from this kingdom who have not bowed their will to the will of the Father and are doing the will of God. This leaves out all unsaved souls, for only those who are in Christ and indwelt by His Spirit can do the will of the Father.

Matthew 16:19, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” Was the apostle Peter given the keys, the authority, to open an earthly kingdom, or was he given authority to use the keys to preach the gospel which opened the kingdom to the Jews in Acts 2 and the Gentiles in Acts 10?

Matthew 18:3, “Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Here again only those who have a child-like spirit can enter into the kingdom. This leaves out all unsaved souls, for only those in whose heart the Holy Spirit has worked can ever have a child-like spirit or disposition. See also Matthew 19:14.

All of these Scriptures correspond to our Lord’s words in John 3:3-6, that the only way any one can enter God’s kingdom is by the new birth, by becoming a new creation, and by this work being done by the Spirit of the living God. This rules out then the remotest possibility of the kingdom of heaven being different from the kingdom of God. They are one and the same: a spiritual kingdom.

It was not, and had never been in God’s eternal purpose, to give Christ an earthly kingdom. To this fact our Lord gives full agreement in John 18:36 when standing before Pilate: “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

Let us go further. There are those who say that Christ preached the gospel of the kingdom, which was an earthly kingdom over which He would be Ruler and the Jews rejected it, so He turned to the cross as His second choice; but will come someday and will yet set up this kingdom. These same people go on and say that Paul preached a different gospel which was the gospel of the grace of God. But, this is just not so! There is only one gospel, the good news of the grace of God in His mercy to poor sinners in the Lord Jesus Christ as a result of His cross-work for which purpose He came into the world, and for this purpose only did He come. Therefore, the gospel of our blessed Lord, and the gospel of Paul, His servant, was the same.

Paul preached of this kingdom of God, which is the rule and reign of Christ in the heart and operative in the life. Acts 19:8, “And Paul went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning

the kingdom of God,” which is the rule and the reign of Christ the King in the hearts and lives of His people who make up His kingdom.

Listen again to Acts 20:25 as Paul sums up to the Ephesian elders his preaching among them: “And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.” And what did he state in verses 20,21 & 24 to be the content of his preaching concerning the kingdom of God?—“I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, *repentance* toward God, and *faith* toward our Lord Jesus Christ...to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

Listen again to the blessed apostle as he preaches to the day of his death, and what is he preaching? Acts 28:30, 31: “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence” (see also 28:23).

“The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). “The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power” (1Co 4:20). When the King comes in power with His word, men are saved and made subjects of this kingdom which is a spiritual kingdom.

There are many more Scriptures I could give you to show that the kingdom of God was preached long after Christ went back to heaven, but these will suffice.

As there is but one kingdom of God, even so God recognized but one gospel, that is the gospel preached by our Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry. This is the same gospel preached by John the Baptist, and all the apostles and inspired writers of the New Testament. Paul preached this same gospel and even pronounced a curse upon any who would dare preach “another gospel.” Nor was this gospel foreign to the Old Testament saints, for in Galatians 3:8 we see that this same gospel had been presented to Abraham, who was saved by believing it, and who thereby became the father of all the righteous.

6. The Character of the True Israel, Old and New

As this great truth of the present rule of Christ over His kingdom and His people, the true Israel of God, reigning with Him (Rom 5:17) unfolds, we are made to praise the Lord that God’s chosen people on earth today are one in Him, heirs with Him, members of His body, married to Him, and are made partakers of His kingdom with Him. They are not looking for a physical kingdom of power and splendor, which lasts only for 1000 years, but are, like their spiritual father Abraham, looking “for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:10). Also like Abraham, “they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:16).

Therefore, I believe it would be in order for us today to look at the expressions used in the New Testament, which indeed are gathered from the prophets of the Old Testament, as to how the true Israel of God, the children of the kingdom of God are described.

Remember now, these descriptions apply to those who make up the kingdom of God now, and not in a so-called kingdom of 1000 years here upon this earth in the future.

Remember what we have seen: the New Testament teaches that the church, the body of born-again believers, the true Israel of God, is the true and only heir to all the Old Testament promises. It teaches that *the church* alone fits the description of the chosen people referred to in the Old Testament; that it alone is God's special instrument for communicating His eternal purpose, and that in the sight of God there is no longer any difference between the Jewish nation and all the other nations of this world.

The descriptions given in the Old Testament, of the true Israel of God—the church, the spiritual kingdom of God—are applied by the dispensationalists and the premillennialists to the physical nation of Israel in a so-called golden age upon this earth when Christ is supposed to rule and reign 1000 years with His throne in Jerusalem. But the New Testament writers know nothing of such a teaching, because they apply these Scriptures which describe the true Israel of God, to the church of the living God in Christ, and to every believer who makes up the body of Christ, the kingdom of God.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the manner by which the true Israel of God would be called: "They shall call thee, the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa 60:14). In Hebrews 12:22, this designation is given to the true Israel of God: "Ye are come unto Mt. Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."

In Isaiah 61:3, the true Israel of God is called: "Trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD." This expression follows Isaiah 61:1-3, and foretells our Lord's earthly ministry while here on earth, and which He Himself confirms in Luke 4:18-19. All believers, the true Israel of God, are "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord" because they, as the trees of righteousness, "bring forth good fruit" (Mat 7:17). They, as trees of righteousness, are "planted by the heavenly Father" (Mat 15:13); and they, as trees of righteousness, are not cut down by the axe of God's wrath (Mat 3:10).

Again in Isaiah 61:6, we read that the true Israel of God "shall be named the priests of the LORD: men shall call you the ministers of our God." This is applied to all believers, the true Israel of God, by the apostle Peter: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

Again in Isaiah 62:4, "Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah," meaning: "For the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." In Matthew 3:17, we hear the heavenly Father saying that He was well pleased with His Beloved, the Lord Jesus, and delighted in Him. So He is also pleased, delighted, with His children, the true Israel, who have been accepted in Christ the Beloved (Eph 1:6) and married to Him (Eph 5:27-32). Christ is the Bridegroom and His people the bride, those whom He has bought with the price of His own precious blood; they are married to Him and in them He finds His delight.

Again in Isaiah 62:12, "They shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken." How do the New Testament writers show that these names belong to the present spiritual Israel? 2 Timothy 1:9 says we were called with an holy calling; 1 Peter 1:18-19 says we were redeemed with

the precious blood of Christ; Luke 19:10 says that we were sought out by the Holy Spirit when we were lost in sin; Ephesians 2:1-3 tells us that the same Holy Spirit quickened us and made us alive unto God in Christ, and Ephesians 1:4 tells us that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before God.

Let us go further. From the writings of the prophets of the Old Testament we can also piece together a full-length description of those men and women, young people, boys and girls, saved by the grace of God in Christ, who would be the true Israel of God. They would have everlasting joy upon their heads (Isa 51:11). Their eyes and ears would be open to the things of the Lord, and their tongues would sing His praise (Isa 35:5, 6). Their voices would be the voices of joy and gladness (Jer 33:11). The word of the Lord would be in their mouth (Isa 51:16). The law of the lord would be written in their hearts (Jer 31:33). Their lives would “flourish like an herb” (Isa 66:14) and their feet would be “beautiful upon the mountains” (Isa 52:7).

All of these Scriptures can be traced out to show their fulfillment in the spiritual Israel of God as recorded in the New Testament, for this is what our God does for us when He saves us. Old things pass away, behold all things become new (2Co 5:17). Christ gives us of His joy to the full (Joh 16:24). We speak to ourselves in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord (Eph 5:19). We rejoice in the Lord (Phi 4:4). With our mouth we offer the sacrifice of praise to God...giving thanks to His name (Heb 13:15). Surely God’s law is written upon our hearts (Heb 8 & 10) and we say with Paul that we delight in the law of God in the inward man (Rom 7:22) and out of our inward parts flow rivers of living water (Joh 7:38) as we walk in the pathway of righteousness and true holiness (Eph 4:24). And truly those who preach His gospel have beautiful feet (Rom 10:15).

Are you beginning to see that the Old Testament and the New Testament agree that it is God’s spiritual Israel in Christ to whom these things are spoken? Israel after the flesh cannot claim these precious promises and truths, but only those who have been born again by the Spirit of God. Because God is not the author of confusion (I Cor 14:33), we may be sure He did not inspire the New Testament writers to describe the church in the above terms unless such terms, after Calvary, referred only to the church. You see, only one body of people—either the nation of Israel or the church, but not both—can be the children of promise, the children of Abraham, the elect of God, the true circumcision, the heirs of the kingdom and the people of God.

Again, Isaiah prophesied that “Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit” (Isa 27:6), and “the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing...in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water”(Isa 35:1, 2, 6, 7).

The prophet also promised: “The LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody” (Isa 51:3). And, “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down

with the kid: and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them” (Isa 11:6).

Oh, what a description of the true Israel of God when by the Holy Spirit the poor sinner under conviction is made to lay down his arms of rebellion, hoist the white flag of surrender, and lay at the feet of God in true repentance, taking the blame for his sinful condition and pleading guilty at the bar of God’s justice. What a picture of that same sinner, now forgiven, now washed in the blood of Christ, now cleansed and made whole with his heart of rebellion broken, a little child in obedience, resting by faith in Christ! What a picture of the soul saved by the grace of God with a new nature and heart, praising God for His mercies! Surely the wolf of his depraved nature is made to dwell with the lamb nature that God gives him. Surely his leopard nature is made to lie down with the kid nature that he has received from God. Surely by God’s grace his desert heart that was cold, rebellious, proud and unbelieving, now rejoices and blossoms as he brings forth fruit unto God and rejoices in God his Savior.

All of this could not be said of physical Israel after the flesh because they are full of unbelief and still cry today: “We will not have this man to rule over us.” They still hate the precious name of Jesus, the Jehovah of the Old Testament. No, dear friend, this all applies to the *spiritual Israel* made up of repenting, believing Jews and Gentiles, in whose hearts the Spirit of the living God has worked and thus prepared them for the entrance of the King.

Now let us see more of the names given to the true Israel of God by the New Testament writers and see how so many of them are fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies.

We are called “the children of God” (Rom 8:16); “the household of God”(Eph 2:19); “the children of Abraham” (Gal 3:7); “Abraham’s seed” (Gal 3:29); “the children of promise” (Rom 9:8); “heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:29); “the elect of God” (Col 3:12); “the heirs of God” (Rom 8:17); “the temple of God” (1Co 3:16); “the true circumcision” (Phi 3:3); “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16); “heirs of the kingdom” (Jam 2:5); “the sons of God” (Joh 1:12); “kings and priests unto God” (Rev 1:6); “the New Jerusalem” (Rev 3:12); “the holy city”(Rev 21:2); and four things are spoken of us in 1 Peter 2:9, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

If the Word of God says that believers in Christ are all these things just mentioned, then we should praise Him that we are spiritual Israel. Surely since the New Testament teaches us nothing about a future kingdom of Christ here upon earth, and since the Scriptures are plain that the promises of the Old Testament apply to this present time and the New Testament always gives them a spiritual meaning, then we can safely say that the chosen people of God are His blood-bought ones, and not one little nation in the Near East that lies in darkness and unbelief.

7. The Promises of God to Abraham

We have given Scriptural proof that the *true Israel of God* consists not in Abraham’s seed after the flesh: “For these are not the children of God” (Rom 9:8), but consists in

the children of the *promise* given to Abraham through the true Seed who is Christ. “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen [Gentiles] through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham...Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed which is Christ...therefore there is neither Jew nor Greek [Gentile], there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus, and if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:7-9, 16, 28, 29).

Now the question is asked: When did God give Abraham these promises that the nations of the earth would be blessed through him, that his spiritual seed would be Christ and that those who by faith in Him would be heirs with Him of the same promises?

To answer this: let us go back to Genesis, the book of beginnings and listen as God speaks to Abraham. When we read the Scriptural account of the life of Abraham we find that there were four promises made to him by God Himself. They were: (1) the promise to make the descendants of Abraham into a great nation, (2) the promise of a great posterity, (3) the promise that Abraham’s descendants would inherit the land of Canaan and (4) above all, the promise of the Messiah.

Let us look at each one of these and see how they were fulfilled, especially that last one concerning the promise of the Messiah and how we by faith in Him have the fulfillment of this promise as the spiritual seed of Abraham.

A. The Promise of a Great Nation

First: the promise to *make the descendants of Abraham into a great nation*. “Now the LORD said unto Abram, Get thee out of...thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing” (Gen 12:1, 2). Was God faithful to perform that which He had spoken? Yes, some 400 years after His covenant with Abraham this promise was fulfilled. God had shown Abraham in Genesis 15:13 and 14 that there would be a 400 year delay, but the time came when it was fulfilled. Also, the Lord confirmed the promise to Jacob, Abraham’s grandson: He said, “I am God, the God of thy father; fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation” (Gen 46:3).

This great promise was fulfilled under the leadership of Moses as the Israelites came forth out of bondage in Egypt, and under Joshua as they achieved their mighty victories in the land of Canaan. In Deuteronomy 2:25, we read that Moses testified that God caused the other nations to respect the *greatness* of Israel.

In exhorting the Israelites to obedience to the God of Abraham, Moses said: “Surely this *great nation* is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there *so great*, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for” (Deu 4:6, 7).

If you would read chapters 8-12 of Joshua, you would find that they testify to the unmistakable greatness of the nation of Israel as it marched triumphantly through the

land of Canaan; and King David, looking back on those victories many years later, was moved to cry out to the Lord: “What one nation in the earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his own people, to make thee *a name of greatness* and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people?” (1Ch 17:21)

We see then that this first promise to Abraham was fulfilled, for God had made of Abraham’s physical seed a great nation which reached its zenith of power, strength, and glory, under the reigns of David and Solomon.

B. The Promise of a Great Posterity

The second promise made to Abraham was the promise of *a great posterity*, that his descendants would be too numerous to count: God said, “And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered” (Gen 13:16). “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be” (15:5). “As the sand which is upon the sea shore so shall thy seed be” (22:17).

We know that without the shadow of a doubt God fulfilled this promise as His Word confirms. Listen to king Solomon praying: “O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the *dust of the earth* in multitude” (2Ch 1:9)

Moses said to Israel: “The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude” (Deu 1:10). And the writer of Hebrews agreed that the promise had been fulfilled: “Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude” (Heb 11:12).

And then finally we read that during the reign of Solomon: “Judah and Israel were as many as the sand which is by the sea in multitude” (1Ki 4:20); and Hebrews affirms there sprang from Abraham descendants as innumerable “as the sand which is by the sea shore” (11:12).

So we see then that this promise was also fulfilled, for God surely made the physical seed of Abraham as the dust of the earth, as the sand of the sea, and as the stars of heaven for multitude.

C. The Promise of Inheritance

Now the third thing promised to Abraham was that his descendants would *inherit the land of Canaan*. God repeated this promise many times: “Unto thy seed will I give this land” (Gen 12:7); “Lift up thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever” (Gen 13:14, 15); “I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it...to thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen 15:7, 18); “I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession” (Gen 17:8).

Was God faithful to perform that which He had spoken? Yes, hundreds of years later the descendants of Abraham went on to possess in peace all the land which the Lord had promised to them: “And the LORD gave unto Israel *all* the land which he swore to give

unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein, and the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered *all* their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; *all* came to pass” (Jos 21:43-45).

Did the land they ruled really reach all the way from Egypt to the river Euphrates as promised by God in Genesis 15:18? “Solomon reigned over *all* kingdoms from *the river* unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt” (1Ki 4:21). Was that river the Euphrates? Solomon “had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphshah” (1Ki 4:24). Tiphshah was located on the Euphrates in Mesopotamia.

Why are we raising these questions? Because it is proclaimed by some today that God did not keep His promise to Israel at that time, and they did not rule over all the land; and therefore He must give Christ an earthly reign so these promises may be fulfilled. But these have already been fulfilled and God has kept His Word.

D. The Promise of the Messiah

Now the fourth promise made to Abraham was the promise of *the Messiah*. This greatest of all the promises was not expressed to Abraham, or to Isaac or Israel, in those terms, but the true meaning of God’s Word has long ago been shown to us. God said to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob or Israel: “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). And the apostle Paul was shown by divine revelation the identity of the Seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal 3:16). This is the greatest of all the promises, that Abraham would bless the nations through his seed, Christ.

Has that promise been fulfilled? “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal 4:4); “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Joh 3:16). Yes, Christ came to redeem His people from their sins. He came as “the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3), and in Him “all the promises of God are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God” (2Co 1:20).

These promises are all spiritual promises made to Abraham’s seed, Christ, and to us; and we are therefore heirs of these promises, and rightly called: “the true Israel of God.”

“And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen [Gentile] through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal 3:8, 9). We find here then that the only way of blessing is to be a spiritual seed of Abraham and not a physical seed, for the blessing came through Christ only by the gospel; and this is the promise which God has given to us.

The only way in which we can be partakers of the promises is by the new birth: or as one puts it, “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by

these ye might be *partakers of the divine nature* , having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2Pe 1:4).

We must be born into the spiritual kingdom of God. This work is accomplished only by the Holy Spirit who plants in our hearts the incorruptible seed of the Word of God and makes us new creatures in Christ. This He does by calling us from the grave of sin (Eph 2:1-3), convicting us of the awful sin of unbelief (Joh 16:7-11), bringing us by the law to shut our mouths and to stand guilty before God (Rom 3:19, 20), to cry: “God be merciful to me, the sinner” (Luke 18:13), to work in our hearts that godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation (2Co 7:10), to shut us up to the faith-way of salvation in Christ (Gal 3:24) and to reveal Christ in us (Gal 1:16) so that we may say: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

Having brought us to Christ, shown us our guilty, lost condition before God, and caused us to look away to Christ forever from every false hope, and this by faith, the Holy Spirit brings us by His Word into the realization that we are now heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17) and have been made to “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6). Therefore we rule and reign with Him upon the earth as a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that we should show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1Pe 2:9).

Halleluia! Praise His holy and righteous name for His marvellous grace that “has made us kings and priests unto God” (Rev 1:6; 20:6) and therefore called “Blessed” by God Himself.

8. How God Brings Us into the True Israel

Let us see how God works by His Spirit in our hearts to bring us to Christ and translate us from the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of Satan, into the kingdom of Christ, thereby making us spiritual children of Abraham, the true Israel of God.

God’s eternal purpose was that both Jew and Gentile would be fellow-heirs together of the same promises, and that they would make up the church, the body of Christ, the true Israel of God, according to Ephesians 2:11-22. Now, the question is: How does He work in our hearts to bring us to Christ, seeing we are by nature alienated from the life of God? If we are made the true Israel of God in salvation, and if salvation is a spiritual thing, discerned and understood only by a spiritual man, then how is all of this going to be done, seeing the natural man is dead in trespasses and sins? (Eph 2:1). How is such a marvelous work going to be performed, if man is in such a condition, as we read, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1Co 2:9)?

How is a man going to believe when he does not know what and whom to believe, seeing he has no spiritual eyes with which to see his own sinfulness, and the beauty of the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ?

How is a man going to repent when he has no knowledge of what to repent of? How is a man going to flee from the wrath to come when he has no knowledge of his danger as a criminal before a just and holy God? How is a man going to seek Christ when he has no idea of how to seek Him or of any need that Christ may fulfill for him? How is a man going to be constrained to seek light when he has no knowledge and is in spiritual darkness? How is a man going to love God when he does not know that he hates Him?

How is a man going to cry after liberty if he does not know he is in bondage? How can a man exercise a free will in choosing Christ when his will is enslaved by sin and Satan? How is a man going to seek heaven when he is ignorant that he is even going to hell? How is a man going to walk in the paths of righteousness and true holiness when he is satisfied with the paths of self-will, self-pleasing, self-confidence and self-righteousness?

How is a man going to pick himself up by his boot straps and bring himself to God, seeing he lies dead in sin? “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” (Jer 13:23). This is the prophet’s reasoning: Since an Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor a leopard his spots, then neither can you who are accustomed to doing evil do good without the work of the Holy Spirit in your hearts and lives! Therefore, how are you going to be made the true Israel of God?

Dear friend, all of this that I have given you is Scripture. This is the way the Bible describes our depraved hearts before God. Every man by nature is dead in trespasses and sins; he can not come to Christ, he will not come to Christ; he must be brought there by the Spirit of the living God. So, to be made a member of the body of Christ, to be made a part of the true Israel of God; it must be wholly and completely a work of God’s distinguishing grace based upon the redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ by His bloodshedding at the cross. And since you and I by nature, both Jew and Gentile, lie dead in trespasses and sin, it is of a necessity that the Holy Spirit work in our hearts if we are ever saved and made the true Israel of God.

We read in John 6:63, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.” Did you hear that?—“the flesh profiteth nothing.” He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but he who is one inwardly, whose heart has been circumcised by the Spirit of God (Rom 2:28, 29). The flesh has no part in the work of God. “That which is born of flesh is flesh” (Joh 3:6). Therefore, for us to be saved, we must be born again by the instrument of the Word in the hands of the Holy Spirit, for “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” All fleshly activities amount to nothing where the regeneration of dead sinners is concerned. We must be born into the kingdom of God. Neither the logical arguments advanced by the *mind*, nor hypnotic powers brought to bear upon the *will*, nor touching appeals made to the *emotions*, nor beautiful music and hearty singing to catch the *ear*, nor sensuous trappings to draw the *eye*, are of the slightest avail in stirring dead sinners. It is not the choir, nor the soloist, nor the preacher, but the Spirit that quickens.

The Holy Spirit finds you and I wedded to our natural stock: wedded to our lusts, wedded to our pride, wedded to our self-righteousness, wedded to our self-sufficiency, and He must, by the law of God, cut us off from the natural stock, and graft us by faith

into Christ, into the good olive tree, and thereby make us one with Him, and therefore the true Israel of God.

When the Holy Spirit comes to us, He finds us “rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing” (Rev 3:17). So therefore, He has to bring the law of God into our hearts and begin to convince us of sin, righteousness, and of judgment, and to show us that we are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked before God—destitute of any righteousness that God will accept.

Again, the Holy Spirit must convince us that though we pray and seek the knowledge of the Bible, and strictly observe the Lord’s day and attend the gospel ministry, and even though our neighbors see a great change in us outwardly, yet, if we have not been broken from our doings and our duties, laying at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, emptied of all self, we are still attached to the natural olive tree, and have not been completely cut away, and grafted into Christ, and thereby become of the true Israel of God.

You see, dear friend, the soul that God saves, and makes His child, must come to know somewhat of its own emptiness and of its own nothingness before God (Mat 5:3).

Now let me ask you a question. If indeed, as the pretribulationists and the premillennialists say, that the Holy Spirit is going to go up at the secret rapture of the church; I pray ask you who is going to do this work in the hearts of all those so-called millions who are supposed to be saved during the tribulation and in the millennium (if there was one)? Who is going to work that work of salvation in them when it takes the power of God’s Spirit to do it? The answer to that question is that this is the day of grace; now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation: there will be no hope after Christ comes for any yet lost. There will be no second chance, for when Christ comes the second time, the door of salvation will be shut forever (Mat 25:10)

Let us go further. The Holy Spirit in breaking off and cutting from the natural tree, must show the sinner that he is a transgressor from the womb, that he came into the world a guilty creature; and that in the time of his ignorance and ever since his birth, he has been guilty of many actual sins, and if those sins are not covered by the blood of Christ, they will cause him to perish for ever.

Again, the Holy Spirit must show the soul that, for all he does, he is a “sinner” still, that his best labors are an abomination in the sight of God and that his own righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God. My friend, even though you do your best, the best that you can, you are still a sinner, and even your best labors are still works of darkness in the eyes of God. You still abide under the curse of God, under God’s holy and righteous law: “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10). No matter what you do, you cannot satisfy the demands of God’s holy law. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Has the Holy Spirit thus dealt with your soul?

Again, the Holy Spirit must show you that God will not accept part from you and part from Christ. Salvation must be all of Christ; you must be engrafted into Him by His work alone; wholly by the work of God’s Holy Spirit. We find like Jonah did in the belly of the whale, that “salvation is of the Lord.” And it is only by the operation of the Holy Spirit of God that any of us are made the true Israel of God.

Again, the Holy Spirit must show you that saving faith is a *gift*. We receive it from above. The faith of the natural man is not the faith of God's elect. This surely strips us at the feet of Christ, knowing for the first time in our lives that we are at the mercy of another, guilty, lost, ruined, undone and helpless. If it were not for the grace and power of God the Holy Spirit we would be lost and lost for ever.

This is why I praise the Lord. Oh, I praise Him. I was a religionist, lost and going to hell, without hope and without God. But God, the Holy Spirit, came and wooed me and won me, and brought me to Christ, and worked in my heart by stripping me down at His feet and letting me see that I couldn't believe Him. I didn't know what true saving faith was. It wasn't the faith that I could work up, but it was the faith that God gives.

You see, this is where the Holy Spirit has been bringing the poor lost sinner all the while, to a state of poverty of spirit, nothing in himself, all in Christ. It is here that He gives faith to lay hold of Christ as the poor sinner's Lord, Savior and Deliverer. It is right here, in this way, that he is engrafted into the True Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, and thereby made the true Israel of God. We are born into the kingdom of God by the Spirit of God and it is by the operation of the Spirit that we are cut off from the old natural stump, the old natural tree, and contrary to nature, are grafted into Christ, the good Olive Tree. If we were cut off from the natural and grafted into the natural, we could only bring forth that which we always brought forth—sin. But we are taken out, cut completely away from the old stock, and grafted in against nature, into the true vine, the Lord Jesus Christ and His life begins to flow in us.

Listen! Christ lays hold of a sinner and draws him to Himself; for by one Spirit, we are all baptized into one body, who is Christ. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit, communicates to the repenting, believing sinner His faith, the faith of the Son of God, He thereby enables the soul to lay hold of the Lord Jesus Christ. He comes to our hearts as the sealing Spirit and abides in the believing soul and thereby makes Christ precious and real to the heart and soul of that poor sinner.

Then having grafted the sinner into Christ, the poor soul now gets a ravishing sight of the Savior. He sees His excellency; he sees His beauty; he sees His glory as being revealed in the gospel, and he sees in Christ a full, suitable, willing Savior. The sinner receives a new heart and a new nature to enjoy, trust, and delight in this Blessed Savior, to honor and to commune with Him and to hold Him by faith, so that he can not let Him go. Why? Because he has been engraved upon the very palms of the hands of Christ, and by His stripes he has been healed from the hurt of sin.

Again, the Holy Spirit in giving faith furnishes the sinner with the feet to come to Christ and heart to receive Him. What the sinner could not do by nature, he can do by grace. God "makes us willing in the day of his power." The soul that once tried all remedies for his sin-sick soul, now finds in Christ his life, for he has been engrafted into the branch through which flows all of the life-giving sap from the root. Christ is the root, trunk, and the branch, and we are one in Him—and for this I praise Him and rejoice in what He has done for my never-dying soul.

Truly then, the soul that has been grafted into Christ is spoken of as being "married" to Christ, bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. He is spoken of as being a member of

His body, and our body becoming His temple, the temple or dwelling place of His Spirit—and he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. We have been made one in Him. The soul redeemed by the grace of God and made the true Israel of God can now say: My beloved is mine and I am His; His life is my life; His inheritance is my inheritance; His name has become my name; His character, my character; His righteousness, my righteousness; His glory, my glory; His standing in heaven, my standing.

Now as the true Israel of God, the saved soul looks for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness and where God will be all in all manifested unto us in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. We shall rejoice in Him throughout eternity, that ever He elected us, called us, justified us, and glorified us in Himself.

I praise Him for letting me see and know the scope of His eternal purpose, that is, that all things would head up in the Lord Jesus Christ; and that He would take dead, vile, wretched, hell-deserving sinners, both Jew and Gentile, who deserve nothing but to be cast out of His presence forever, and make them His very own. He graciously gives them a new heart and a new nature, and calls them His heirs, His children. This work is performed by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. These blood-washed ones will be with Him forever to behold His glory and sing His praises throughout eternity, with Christ their Lord and Savior, ruling and reigning with Him.



L.R. Shelton, Jr. (1923-2003) was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he later became associate pastor in his father's Baptist church. While he did not have the opportunity to attend college or seminary, as a young man he devoured the writings of Spurgeon, Pink, the Puritans, and Lloyd-Jones. In 1970 he began a church, Christian bookstore, and gospel outreach in Litchfield, Minnesota. There he developed a God-given burden to share classic Christian literature from prior centuries freely worldwide, beginning to reproduce sermon booklets on a mimeograph machine. In 1978 the small ministry moved to Pensacola, Florida, where Mount Zion Bible Church was founded.