

CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE

(Your questions and comments are welcome)

(**Bold** type and underlining in scripture text have been added for emphasis)

This consideration will rest on a threefold premise:

That the New Testament scriptures explain the ultimate meaning and fulfillment of the law and the prophecy contained in the Old Testament scriptures;

That the New Testament scriptures support another foundational proposition-- the long range focus of Old Testament prophecies is on the new covenant which is inclusive of God's administration in the present age, the millennium, and thereafter;

That those men who recorded the New Testament scriptures are God's original and sole beneficiaries of His revelation that explains "what, or what manner of time" was spoken by the Old Testament prophets.

The New Testament scriptures determine the soundness of these premises, and whether or not they conflict with the historical, and the physical-temporal aspects of Old Testament prophecy.

While it seems necessary to mention the debate between literal and non-literal (allegorical) interpretation, this consideration is not an effort to engage that debate as it relates to Israel and the Church, the "land" etc., **but rather, to see what the New Testament scriptures say about the Old Testament scriptures.**

Fundamental to the disagreement between "dispensational premillenarians" as a group and "historical premillenarians", and "amillenarians" and "postmillenarians" as a group is **the relationship, if any, of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament to the church in the New Testament.** (*And, let me state at the beginning, the Nation of Israel in the Old Testament is not the same entity as the Church in the New Testament*). The "dispensationalists" say that the cause for disagreement is that they use the literal method of interpretation, whereas, the other groups use the non-literal method (an assertion to which the other groups, more or less, acquiesce). The actual cause of the Israel-Church disagreement is that "dispensationalists" do not accept the premise that the New Testament writers are explaining the ultimate meaning and application of the law and prophecies in the Old Testament, while, at least to some degree, the other groups accept this premise. However, amillennialists, and to a greater extent postmillennialists, do attach a highly spiritualized meaning to the "Book of Revelation".

Dispensationalists argue that the allegorical method of interpretation results in the mind of the interpreter being the authority for interpretation, instead of the scriptures. They argue that the literal method is a safeguard against mental manipulation of meaning. I would submit that man has not, nor can he, devise an interpretive method that men with impure minds and hearts will not manipulate. While I firmly believe that Jesus, in the gospels, and the writers of the New Testament were interpreting the Old Testament scriptures, I am not suggesting that persons who hold to self-willed opinions will not alter the New Testament

writer's interpretation. What I am asserting, is that any sincere seeker of truth can understand the ultimate meaning and fulfillment of the law and the prophecies of the Old Testament scriptures, only by knowing and accepting the explanation of these divinely inspired messengers who wrote the New Testament scriptures.

To determine the soundness of the premise that the New Testament scriptures explain the Old Testament law and prophecies, we must examine the scriptures themselves. In Peter's first epistle, we read: **1 Peter 1**

9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

10 Of which salvation **the prophets have enquired and searched diligently**, who prophesied of **the grace that should come unto you**:

11 Searching **what, or what manner of time** the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

12 Unto whom it was revealed, that **not unto themselves**, but **unto us** they did minister the things, which are **now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you** with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

Relevant to our subject, it should be noted that:

1. The salvation that the prophets by the Spirit testified of beforehand concerned both the **sufferings of Christ** and **the glory that would follow** Christ's suffering. While many expositors would agree that the prophecies of Christ's suffering are explained by the New Testament writers, fewer would acknowledge the extent to which they explain the glory that proceeds from that suffering, as it relates to the nation of Israel. Here in First Peter, chapter one, the context is referring to the end of our salvation **at the time of Christ's second advent**.

2. The prophets saw that the **things that they ministered were not to themselves** but unto those who would live **after** the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

3. It is noteworthy that **these things spoken by the prophets** are "reported by them that preached **the gospel** unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven".

This passage is clear testimony that the Old Testament prophecies were the subject matter of the gospel message. Some other scriptures that so testify and establish this proposition as fact are as follows: **Acts 3**

24 Yea, and **all** the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of **these** days.

Acts 17

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

(As Paul proclaimed the gospel to the Bereans, the scriptures that they searched to establish the accuracy of Paul's message were Old Testament scriptures.)

The apostle Paul proclaims at: Acts 24

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, **so worship I the God of my fathers**, believing all things which are written in **the law** and in **the prophets**:

Paul also says: **Acts 26**

22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, **saying none other things** than those which **the prophets** and **Moses** did say should come:

23 That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be **the first** that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto **the people** and to **the Gentiles**.

Again when Paul was at Rome, we read at: **Acts 28**

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both **out of the law of Moses**, and **out of the prophets**, from morning till evening.

And again, **Romans 1**

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto **the gospel** of God,
2 (Which he had promised afore **by his prophets** in the holy scriptures,)

Romans 15

4 For whatsoever things were written **aforetime** were written for **our** learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

Romans 16

25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my **gospel**, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation **of the mystery**, which was **kept secret since the world began**,

26 But **now** is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to **all nations** for the obedience of faith:

Paul, writing to the church at Corinth concerning the behavior and experience of the children of Israel in their wilderness journeying tells us at:

1 Corinthians 10

6 Now these things were **our examples**, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

11 Now all these things happened unto them **for examples**: and they are written for **our** admonition, **upon whom the ends of the world are come**.

These scriptures are declarations by both apostles, Peter and Paul, that their message was contained in the Old Testament scriptures. At Acts 26:22 Paul declares, concerning the gospel that he proclaimed, “*** saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.”

At Acts 26:22, Paul tells us that the things proclaimed by the prophets were intended for us, and that they were the subject matter of the gospel that was preached in the New Testament.

Now we will enquire in the scriptures to determine the accuracy of the premise that the long range focus of Old Testament prophecies is on the new covenant, which is inclusive of God’s administration in the present age, the millennium, and thereafter.

One of the more definitive Old Testament prophecies concerning the new covenant is: Jeremiah 31

31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make **a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:**

32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law **in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;** and will **be their God,** and they shall **be my people.**

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will **forgive their iniquity,** and I will remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah also prophesies at: Jeremiah 32

36 And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence;

37 Behold, I will **gather them out of all countries,** whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:

38 And **they shall be my people, and I will be their God:**

39 And I will give them **one heart, and one way,** that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:

40 And I will make an **everlasting covenant** with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

41 Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

42 For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.

And, Ezekiel prophesies at: Ezekiel 11

19 And I will give them **one heart,** and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the **stony heart** out of their flesh, and will give them **an heart of flesh:**

20 That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and **they shall be my people, and I will be their God.** (For application see 2 Corinth. 3:1-3; 6:11,16).

The referenced prophecies are only three among many, not only by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but also by the other Old Testament prophets, related to the new covenant. However, these three passages contain major elements of the new covenant, some of which are: it is made with Israel; laws are written in the heart (put in them a new spirit, remove the stony heart and give them a heart of flesh that they may walk in my statutes); I will be their God and they shall be my people; forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

We will examine some of the New Testament scriptures to learn what they tell us about the promised new covenant. The epistle to the Hebrews contrasts the **old covenant** that God made with Israel, after that He had brought them out of Egypt, with the **new covenant** promised by the prophets. *This epistle shows that the old covenant with its ritual and external forms was a temporal example and shadow of the spiritual and eternal realities of the kingdom of God, under the new covenant administration.*

The epistle further explains that the **new covenant** that God promised to Israel was **instituted by the death of Christ: Hebrews 8**

1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that **offer gifts according to the law**:

5 Who serve unto **the example and shadow of heavenly things**, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

6 **But now** hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also **he is the mediator of a better covenant**, which was established upon better promises.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a **new covenant** with the **house of Israel** and with the **house of Judah**:

The epistle continues by quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34. Then it says at:

Hebrews 8:13- In that he saith, A **new covenant**, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

In chapter nine of Hebrews we are given explanation of Christ's role in transitioning from the old covenant into the new covenant: Hebrews 9

1 Then verily the **first covenant** had also ordinances of divine service, and a **worldly** sanctuary.

2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.

3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

9 Which **was a figure** for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them **until the time of reformation**.

11 **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;

12 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.

13 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:

14 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?

15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of **eternal** inheritance.

16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be **the death** of the testator.

17 For a testament is of force **after men are dead**: otherwise it is of no strength at all **while the testator liveth**.

18 Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.

19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,

20 Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places **made with hands**, which are the **figures of the true**; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

28 So Christ was **once** offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Hebrews 10

16 **This is the covenant** that I will make with them **after those days**, saith the Lord, I will **put my laws into their hearts**, and **in their minds** will I write them;

17 And **their sins and iniquities** will I remember no more.

18 Now where remission of these is, there is **no more offering** for sin.
19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the **blood of Jesus**,
20 By **a new and living** way, which he **hath** consecrated for us, through **the veil**, that is to say, **his flesh**;
21 And having an high priest over **the house** of God;
22 **Let us draw near** with a true heart in full assurance **of faith**, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

It is of the greatest importance to understand that the new covenant is not of mere doctrinal interest, but herein is God's promise to forgive man's sin. In the epistle to the Hebrews, we learn that the provision for forgiveness that is exclusively through the sacrificial offering of Christ is the fulfillment of that element of the new covenant promised to Israel.

All of the gifts, and offerings, and ceremony under the law in the Old Testament, (referred to as dead works at Hebrews 9:14 above), have their meaning realized in and through the Person and work of Christ. In the events of the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the old covenant administration was completed, and the new covenant was divinely introduced as God's eternal mode for administering His Kingdom.

The transition from old covenant administration to the new covenant administration was accompanied by the following changes:

Priesthood-Hebrews 7

11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?
12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity **a change** also of the law.
13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.
14 For it is evident that **our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.**
15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec **there ariseth another priest**,
16 Who is made, **not after the law of a carnal commandment**, but after **the power of an endless life**.
17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest **for ever** after the order of Melchisedec.
18 For there is verily **a disannulling of the commandment going before** for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.
19 For **the law made nothing perfect**, but **the bringing in of a better hope did**; by the which we draw nigh unto God.
20 And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:
21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest **for ever** after the order of Melchisedec:)

22 **By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.**

23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

24 But this man, because he **continueth ever**, hath **an unchangeable** priesthood.

Herein, we learn that under new covenant administration there is a continuation of the priesthood, however, Christ is, both now and forever, the high priest who mediates between God and man. ***Thus, the priesthood through Aaron had completed its function with the introduction of the priesthood of Christ.***

Under new covenant administration, there is sacrifice for sin, but different in nature from the sacrifices under the administration of the old covenant.

Sacrifice-Hebrews 9

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are **the figures of the true**; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself

Not only did the sacrifice for sin change, but also the sacrifice that the Lord's people bring to him changed. **Hebrews 13**

12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

15 By him therefore let us offer **the sacrifice** of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with **such sacrifices** God is well pleased.

“Without the gate” (verse 12) refers to without the gate of earthly Jerusalem and all that represents of form and externalism.

And in coming to Christ we read: **1 Peter 2**

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, as **lively stones**, are built up a **spiritual house**, an **holy priesthood**, to offer up **spiritual sacrifices**, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

But the foundational sacrifice, by men, from which all other sacrifices issue is revealed at: Romans 12

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a **living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, **will of God**.

House-It is common knowledge that in the Old Testament a tabernacle was built wherein God dwelled with the nation of Israel. Later the tabernacle was replaced by a temple built when Solomon, David's son, was Israel's king.

When, however, Christ came, and by his death instituted the new covenant, the temple which was "a figure for the time then present***" (Hebrews 9:8-9) ceased to serve God's purpose as a place for Him to dwell with His people. Therefore, Christ at his ascension was seated "**** on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the **true tabernacle**, which the Lord pitched, and not man."(Hebrews 8:1,2. see also, Hebrews 9:11,24) Therein, Christ dwells as the high priest to mediate before God on behalf of his people.

The scriptures tell us that while Christ dwells in the heavens at the right hand of the Father, Christ also dwells on this earth with his people by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Jesus said at: **John 14**

15 **If ye love me, keep my commandments.**

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you **another Comforter**, that he may abide with you **for ever**;

17 Even the **Spirit of truth**; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

18 **I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.**

19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

20 At that day ye shall know that I am **in my Father**, and **ye in me**, and **I in you**.

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

This promise was realized after Jesus ascended to the Father. We read at:

John 7

39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Acts 2

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance

From this time forward, God's dwelling on this earth is in the hearts of the people who believe the good news proclaimed by the writers who explained the new covenant that God had made with Israel. Also included in Christ are those in heaven, who together with those on earth, constitute the whole family of God. The apostle Paul says at: **Ephesians 3**

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the **whole family in heaven and earth** is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might **by his Spirit in the inner man**;

17 That **Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith**; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Scripture informs us that those in heaven who are a part of the “family” named in Christ includes the Old Testament saints. *The saints of the Old Testament receive redemption from their transgressions through the death of Christ, who is the mediator of the new covenant*, as we have read at Heb. 9:15, on page 6 above.

We read concerning Elijah at: 2 Kings 2

1 And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind **into heaven**.

And, of Abraham we read at: Hebrews 11

9 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, **whose builder and maker is God**.

And, of Abraham’s descendants, particularly the saints in the Old Testament, we read at: Hebrews 11

11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

13 These all died in faith, **not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off**, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that **they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth**.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* **from whence they came out**, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16 But **now** 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**.

Thus, we learn that Abraham and the other Old Testament saints “who died in faith” were living on this earth in anticipation of a heavenly dwelling.

The apostle Paul tells the Gentile believers at: Ephesians 2

19 **Now** therefore **ye** are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and **of** the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto **an holy temple** in the Lord:

22 In whom **ye also** are builded **together** for an habitation of God **through the Spirit**.

Also, the apostle Paul applies to the church Jeremiah's prophecy at:

Jeremiah 31

33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in **their inward parts**, and write it **in their hearts**; and will be **their God**, and they shall be **my people**.

Paul writes at:

2 Corinthians 3

³ Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be **the epistle** of Christ ministered by us, written **not with ink**, but **with the Spirit** of the living God; not in **tables of stone**, but in **fleshy tables of the heart**.

⁶ Who also hath made us able ministers of the **new testament**; not of the letter, but **of the spirit**: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

2 Corinthians 6

18 And will be a **Father unto you**, and ye shall be **my sons and daughters**, saith the Lord Almighty.

Jerusalem-Another fact that is common knowledge, under old covenant administration the city of Jerusalem was the center of authority and worship in the land of Israel.

The apostle Paul tells us that this ancient city is identified with the old covenant and legal bondage, whereas, the Jerusalem that is from above is identified with freedom from that bondage and is the mother of us all. **We read** at: **Galatians 4**

19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23 But he who was of the **bondwoman was born after the flesh**; but he of the **freewoman was by promise**.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to **Jerusalem which now is**, and is **in bondage with her children**.

26 But **Jerusalem which is above is free**, which is **the mother of us all**.

27 **For it is written**, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

31 So then, **brethren**, we are not children **of the bondwoman**, but **of the free**.

We read in the epistle to the Hebrews at: **Hebrews 12**

18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

22 But **ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,** and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 **To** the general assembly and **church of the firstborn**, which are written in heaven, and **to God the Judge of all**, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 **And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling,** that speaketh better things than *that of Abel*.

When the children of Israel received the covenant of law, Moses went up on mount Sinai, and God gave him the ten commandments written in stone, and many other ordinances. The children of Israel saw and feared all that is described in this Hebrews passage.

Here the writer of the Hebrews epistle is *contrasting the two covenants and is explaining that we, Jew and Gentile, have not come to something earthly and temporal when we come to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant. But rather, we have come to that which is spiritual and eternal in nature. When we come to Christ, we are made partakers of the inheritance in God's heavenly kingdom.*

Paul wrote the brethren of Colosse: Colossians 1

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be **partakers of the inheritance** of the saints in light:

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into **the kingdom of his dear Son**

And again, when Paul wrote to the saints at Ephesus: Ephesians 1

13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, **the gospel** of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the **earnest** of our inheritance **until** the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory

Thus, when Christ dwells in us by his Spirit, we can partake of the spiritual realities of the heavenly kingdom, in measure (“earnest” refers to a part of our inheritance) until our body is redeemed (resurrected) at the time of Christ’s return, at which time we will enter into the fullness of our inheritance.

When we come to Jesus: *we are translated into the kingdom of God's Son; we come to mount Zion: and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Jerusalem that is free, the mother of us all. While in this age we enter into the inheritance in measure, we see the fullness being realized at Revelation 21*

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.
2 And I John saw **the holy city, new Jerusalem**, coming down from God out of heaven, **prepared as a bride adorned for her husband**.
3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, **Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God**.
4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.
5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.
6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.
7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and **I will be his God, and he shall be my son**.

Here, again, we have application of that element of the new covenant as recorded in Jeremiah 31:33, “***** will be their God, and they shall be my people**”. ***What commenced in the spiritual and eternal dimension of God’s kingdom at Christ’s first advent, reaches it’s fullness in relation to His second coming, and with the descent of the New Jerusalem. With the descent of the New Jerusalem, God has achieved his original purpose of a dwelling place with man.***

Scripture explains the time of the “new heavens” and “new earth” to be related to the coming of the Lord. We read at:

1 Thessalonians 4

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.
14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.
15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto **the coming of the Lord** shall not prevent them which are asleep.
16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:
17 Them we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5

1 **But of the times and the seasons, brethren,** ye have no need that I write unto you.
2 For yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night**.
3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then **sudden destruction** cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

2 Peter 3

3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,
4 And saying, Where is **the promise of his coming**? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning **his promise**, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

10 But **the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away** with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, **the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.**

11 *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved*, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness,

12 Looking for and hasting unto **the coming** of the day of God, **wherein** the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for **new heavens** and a **new earth**, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Nation-In briefly considering the nation of Israel from a historical perspective, we learn that God, in calling Abraham out from the Ur of Chaldees made these promises to Abraham: **a land, a great nation, a great name, blessing in Abraham to all the families of the earth. Genesis 12**

1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 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:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

God confirms his covenant with Abraham, and then declares the terms that Abraham and his seed must keep, at: Genesis 17

2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

8 And 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; and I will be their God.

9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt **keep my covenant** therefore, **thou, and thy seed** after thee in their generations.

10 **This is my covenant, which ye shall keep**, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you **shall be circumcised.**

11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and **it shall be a token of the covenant** betwixt me and you.

12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

14 And **the uncircumcised** man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he **hath broken** my covenant.

The scripture tells us that Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac was the son that God had promised to Abraham. Then Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons through whom came the twelve tribes of Israel.

In the third month after Israel had left Egypt, they camped in the wilderness of Sinai and the Lord instructed Moses concerning Israel at: **Exodus 19**

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the **house of Jacob**, and tell the **children of Israel**;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, **if ye will obey** my voice indeed, and **keep my covenant**, then ye shall be a **peculiar treasure** unto me **above all people**: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me **a kingdom of priests**, and **an holy nation**. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.

8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

However, when God brought the children of Israel to Kadesh where he would take them into the land of Canaan, they feared the giants that were reportedly in the land and rebelled against the Lord. Consequently, the Lord caused them to wander in the wilderness until all those who were twenty years and upward, except Joshua and Caleb, had died. After forty years in the wilderness, Joshua led those who survived the wilderness over Jordan and into the land.

The above affords a brief history of the nation of Israel until they had entered the land. Now we will enquire in the New Testament scriptures to learn to whom was the initial focus of the gospel message. The following scriptures address this point. **Jesus said at: Matthew 15**

24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep **of the house of Israel**.

And again, when Jesus sent out the twelve disciples, we read: **Matthew 10**

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

6 But go rather to the lost sheep **of the house of Israel**.

John 1

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto **his own**, and **his own** received him not.

12 But **as many as** received him, **to them** gave he power to become **the sons of God**, even **to them** that **believe** on his name:

John 1

29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold **the Lamb of God**, which taketh away the sin of the world.

30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest **to Israel**, therefore am I come baptizing with water

Acts 3

25 Ye are the **children of the prophets**, and **of the covenant which God made with our fathers**, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

26 Unto you **first** God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, **in turning away every one of you from his iniquities**.

Acts 5

29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance **to Israel**, and forgiveness of sins.

Acts 4

10 Be it known unto you all, and **to all the people of Israel**, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

11 **This is the stone** which was set at nought of you builders, which is become **the head of the corner**.

12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Acts 10

36 The word which God sent unto **the children of Israel**, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of **all**.)

Paul, referring to Jesus being of David's seed, says: **Acts 13**

23 Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised **unto Israel** a Saviour, Jesus:

26 Men and brethren, **children of the stock of Abraham**, and whosoever among you feareth God, **to you** is the word of this salvation sent.

32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that **the promise which was made unto the fathers**,

33 **God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children**, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39 And by him **all that believe** are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified **by the law of Moses**.

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;
41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.
42 And when **the Jews** were gone out of the synagogue, **the Gentiles** besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.
43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many **of the Jews** and **religious proselytes** followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.
44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.
45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.
46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God **should first** have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.
47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation **unto the ends of the earth**.

In the above passages, Peter and Paul declare that the events of the first advent of Christ were **the fulfillment to the nation of Israel of the promises of God, spoken by the prophets.**

The gospel was preached to the Jew first, and then it continued to be proclaimed to the Jews. While some believed, others did not.

Acts 14

1 And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue **of the Jews**, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also **of the Greeks** believed.
2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

Acts 17

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue **of the Jews**:
2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,
3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.
4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

Again, we see that Paul continued to preach the gospel to the Jews:

Acts 17

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.
17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

Even though God had particularly sent Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and Peter, James, and John were sent to the Jews, Paul, when in predominately Gentile regions, continued to preach **to the Jews, also**. Paul wrote at: **Galatians 2**

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the **uncircumcision** was committed unto me, as the gospel of the **circumcision** was unto Peter;
8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of **the circumcision**, the same was mighty in me toward **the Gentiles**;) **9** And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that **we should go unto the heathen**, and **they unto the circumcision**.

When Paul was a prisoner at Rome, we read at: Acts 28

17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief **of the Jews** together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.
18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.
19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.
20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for **the hope of Israel** I am bound with this chain.
21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.
22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.
23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.
24 And **some believed** the things which were spoken, and **some believed not**.
25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,
26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:
27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.
28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.
29 And when he had said these words, **the Jews** departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

While a major theme of Paul's epistle to the saints at Rome is an explanation of faith, another and parallel theme is an explanation of "who is a Jew", and the manner in which that spoken in the law of Moses and by the prophets is fulfilled to the nation of Israel. Some passages in the epistle of Romans addressing these questions are:

Romans 1

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from **faith to faith**: as it is written, The just shall live **by faith**.

Romans 2

9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew **first**, and also of the Gentile;

10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew **first**, and also to the Gentile:

11 For there is **no respect of persons** with God.

12 For as many as have sinned **without law** shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned **in the law** shall be judged by the law;

13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

15 Which shew the work of the law **written in their hearts**, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

Romans 2

26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

28 For he is **not a Jew**, which is one **outwardly**; neither is that **circumcision**, which is **outward in the flesh**:

29 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.

Romans 3

1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

3 **For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?**

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

9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: **for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin**;

10 As it is written, There is **none** righteous, no, **not one**:

In this passage we are told that, because some Jews did not believe, their unbelief does not affect (by delay or interruption) God's purpose and provision for Israel, which is through faith in the Person and work of Christ. What God promised is realized by those Jews who receive their Messiah. Some believe, and some do not.

Romans 3

21 But now the **righteousness of God** without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God **which is by faith** of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them **that believe**: for **there is no difference**:

23 For **all** have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through **the forbearance** of God;
26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him **which believeth in Jesus**.
27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified **by faith** without the deeds of the law.
29 **Is he the God of the Jews only?** is he not also of the Gentiles? **Yes, of the Gentiles also:**
30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, **we establish the law**.

In the passage immediately above, we are told that *one who is a Jew in the physical sense is, just as is the Gentile, brought within the benefits of God's provision in Christ on the basis of faith.* And, as mentioned in the previous comment, *the fact that some Jews do not believe does not interrupt or delay the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel*, which fulfillment is in and through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus.

Romans 9

1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

6 **Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.** For they are **not all Israel, which are of Israel:**

7 **Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children:** but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8 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**.

Galatians 3

29 And **if ye be Christ's, then** are ye **Abraham's seed**, and heirs according to the promise.

Romans 9

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

31 But **Israel**, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

33 **As it is written**, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Romans 10

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God **for Israel** is, that they might be saved.
2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, **but not according to knowledge**.
3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, **have not submitted themselves** unto the righteousness of God.
4 For **Christ** is the end of the law for righteousness to every one **that believeth**.

Romans 11

1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.
2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel saying,
3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.
4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.
5 Even so then **at this present time** also there is **a remnant** according to **the election of grace**.
6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.
7 What then? **Israel** hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but **the election** hath obtained it, and **the rest were blinded**.
8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.
9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:
10 Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.
11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather **through their fall** salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.
12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?
13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:
14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.
15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

Paul is not saying that Israel will not fall, but rather, that the purpose of their fall is for the salvation of the Gentiles. **And further**, through Gentile salvation, the Jews might be provoked to jealousy and **some** (the elect) be saved. **This is the explanation of Moses' prophecy** at:

Deuteronomy 32

20 And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is **no faith**.
21 They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

Thus, there is the receiving of some, a remnant according to the election of grace, to life from the dead whole, as we read in the following scriptures:

Acts 14

1 And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.
2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

Acts 17

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:
2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,
3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that **this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ**.
4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.
5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

Acts 28

17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief **of the Jews** together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.
23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified **the kingdom of God**, persuading them **concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets**, from morning till evening.
24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

Paul continues his explanation of the manner by which God is accomplishing the salvation of Israel at:

Romans 11

16 For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.
17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and **thou**, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;
18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.
19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.
20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:
21 For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.
22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.
23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.

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

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

26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

27 For **this** is my covenant unto **them**, when I shall take away **their** sins.

When Paul says, “there shall come out of Sion a Deliverer”, he is referring to Isaiah’s prophecy of Christ’s coming to Zion **at his first advent**, (“And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and **unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob**, saith the Lord. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord;***” Isaiah 59:20,21). Some expositors interpret this scripture in Romans as referring to Christ’s second coming. *However, the coming of the “Deliverer” was a future event when Isaiah so prophesied, and Paul is simply citing the Old Testament passage as Isaiah expressed. Also, we have reviewed clear testimony in scripture that Christ came to deliver the Jews from their sins (an element of the new covenant), and fulfilled this new covenant promise at His first advent.*

In the book of Acts we have read that this new covenant promise was **fulfilled to Israel, and its benefits are realized in this age by those Jews who believe the gospel.** We have read scriptures showing that the apostles proclaimed the gospel to the Jews throughout their entire ministry. **Some Jews believed and some did not.**

In his letter to the saints at Rome, Paul is explaining that under the new covenant administration, *God recognizes as a Jew, one who is a Jew inwardly, and circumcision that is of the heart, in the spirit. Therefore they are not all Israel that are of Israel. They that are Jews according to the flesh are not the children of God. But rather, the children of promise, those who believe, are counted for the seed. It is not as though God’s word has not taken effect, as it relates to Israel.*

Romans 3

1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

3 For what if some did not believe? shall **their unbelief** make **the faith** of God without effect?

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

Because some Jews do not believe does not mean that God has cast away his people. Paul reminds his readers that he himself is an Israelite. Also, that when Elijah thought that he was left alone, there remained a **remnant** that was faithful to God, and that there is, today, **a remnant according to the election**

of grace. *Thus, Israel, as a nation, did not obtain that which they sought, but those Jews who believe have obtained the promise of salvation that is in Christ, as promised in the new covenant to Israel.*

Paul further explains that **Israel, as a nation**, has fallen because inheritance was never through the law **under the old covenant**, but through **the new covenant promised to Israel**, which includes Jews, and also Gentiles, **who believe**. And, that such inclusion of Gentiles will provoke Jews to be jealous, that **some** might be saved.

The Jews fall because of unbelief, but if **they do not continue in unbelief**, they will partake of God's promises to Israel. *We understand that part of Israel is blind through unbelief during this entire age. However, according to Paul's explanation of who is a Jew (one circumcised in their heart by the Spirit- Romans 2:29, and the manner in which God fulfilled His promises to Israel (they are not all Israel who are of Israel- Romans 9:6), "all Israel" will be saved.*

Paul, in writing to the saints at Ephesus, explains that **the Gentiles, being outside of God's old covenant with Israel, have been included in His new covenant promise to Israel, and on the same basis, that being faith, as are the Jews. And further, that both are made one in Christ.** Paul writes at:

Ephesians 1

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

10 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:

11 In whom also **we** have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12 That **we** should be to the praise of his glory, who **first** trusted in Christ.

13 In whom **ye also** trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom **also** after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory

In the foregoing passage, it should be noted that God is gathering together all things into one. This is a significant point in that there is a broadly held teaching that Israel is eternally, or at least during the millennium, separate and distinct from those who are in Christ in this age. Also, it should be noted that in verses 11 and 12, Paul says "we", which it is fair to infer that he refers to Israelites. And, at verse 13 he says "ye", which is a reference to Gentiles. *These inferences can fairly be made based on the context of chapters one, two, and three. In these scriptures, Paul is explaining that, in Christ, God has eternally purposed to gather together into one, Jew and Gentile:*

Ephesians 2

11 Wherefore remember, that **ye** being **in time past** Gentiles in the flesh, who are called **Uncircumcision** by that which is called **the Circumcision** in the flesh made by hands;
12 That **at that time** ye were without Christ, being aliens from **the commonwealth of Israel**, and **strangers from the covenants of promise**, having no hope, and without God in the world:

13 But **now** in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off **are made nigh** by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down **the middle wall of partition** between us;

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

16 And that he might reconcile **both** unto God **in one body** by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

17 And came and preached peace **to you** which were afar off, and **to them** that were nigh.

18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

19 Now therefore **ye are no more strangers** and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom **all** the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord;

22 In whom **ye also** are **builed together** for an habitation of God **through the Spirit**.

A noted proponent of the “Dispensational Premillennial” system of theological thought, in contending that the promises given to Israel do not include the Gentiles, and that these promises are not fulfilled in Christ’s body, the church, stated the following:

“Not only is Israel regarded as a separate nation, but Gentiles as such are expressly excluded. In Ephesians 2:12: “Ye [Gentiles] were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” In the discussion which follows it is important to note that Paul does not indicate that Gentiles come into these promises given to Israel, but rather pictures both Jew and Gentile as being joined in an entirely new entity, namely, the body of Christ.” (Walvoord, John F., Israel In Prophecy, 56,57. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962.).

It is important to note that Paul expressly declares that, while the Gentiles were “strangers from the covenants of promise” given to Israel-v12, that “Now therefore ye [Gentiles] are no more strangers...”v-19. (No more strangers to what? The covenants of promise given to Israel, of course). The word “therefore” rests the statement “ye are no more strangers” on the explanation in verses 13 through 18 of how the “covenants of promise” given to Israel did include the Gentiles. Now the Gentiles are “no more strangers”-v19 from that which the Gentiles were strangers “in time past”-v11. **It is accurate to say that it is a new entity, however, this new entity, being the body of Christ**

and the Church, is the spiritual and eternal fulfillment in Christ of the covenants of promise given to Israel by God.

Ephesians 3

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

10 To the intent that **now** unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places **might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,**

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

The “middle wall of Partition” was that setting apart from all other people, Jacob and his seed for the possessing of the oracles of God. (see Romans 3:2) *However, in Christ, God has reconciled both, Jew and Gentile, to God in one body so that both have access to God through the Holy Spirit. Thus, in the eternal purpose of God, all things come to fulfillment in Christ, and the church which is His body, with nothing related to God by-passing his Son.* The **centrality of Christ** is so refreshingly explained by Paul at:

Colossians 1

15 Who is **the image** of the invisible God, **the firstborn** of every creature:

16 For **by him** were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created **by him**, and **for him**:

17 And **he is** before all things, and **by him** all things consist.

18 And **he is** the head of the body, the church: **who is** the beginning, **the firstborn** from the dead; that in all things **he** might have the preeminence.

19 For it pleased the Father that **in him** should all fullness dwell;

20 And, having made peace through the blood of **his** cross, **by him** to reconcile all things unto **himself**; **by him**, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

Now the church is the possessor of the “wisdom”, and the “truth” of God, as we read in Ephesians 3:10 above, and as recorded in the passage in 1 Timothy that follows:

1 Timothy 3

14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly:

15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the **house of God**, which is **the church** of the living God, **the pillar and ground of the truth**

What has been stated does not suggest or require that Israel and the Church are one and the same entity, but rather, that the promises to the nation of Israel have their spiritual and eternal fulfillment in Christ, Israel’s Messiah. And, that the Church is Christ’s body, inclusive of, both Jew and Gentile. Paul says: “Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the Fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice ye Gentiles, with his people”-Ro. 15:8-10. Further, James who was sent to minister to the Jews, when writing a letter to the church, addresses it to the “**twelve tribes scattered abroad**”-James 1:1. James identifies the letter to be written to **the Church** at: James 5

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders **of the church**; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

While some contend that the continued reference to Israel in the epistles supports the proposition of Israel’s national restoration at Christ’s return, this is merely a reasoned conclusion that is contradicted by the direct testimony of scripture. Such a rationalistic approach to understand scripture, while commonly used, is an avenue to erroneous conclusions.

When Peter went to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile, and preached the gospel, we read at:

Acts 10

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that **on the Gentiles also** was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost **as well as we?**

When Peter was come to Jerusalem, he rehearsed the matter with the Jewish brethren and their response is recorded at:

Acts 11

18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God **also to the Gentiles** granted repentance unto life.

It is evident that Peter, and his Jewish brethren, knew that the new covenant made with Israel **had its fulfillment to them** in Christ. However, God’s **inclusion of the Gentiles** in the promises to Israel was not expected by them.

Peter, in his first epistle, explains to **those who believe the gospel message** (previously we read that Peter's apostleship was to the Israelites), **that they are fulfilling the spiritual- eternal aspect of God's promises to the nation of Israel**. Peter writes at:

1 Peter 2

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, **as lively stones**, are built up **a spiritual house**, an **holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

9 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;

In the book of Exodus, God told Moses to say to the children of Israel at: Exodus 19

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a **peculiar treasure** unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me **a kingdom of priests**, and **an holy nation**. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Peter is telling the church that the Lord's desired relationship with His people, as expressed in the passage in Exodus, is realized in them. They are the nation that Jesus said would be given the kingdom of God, and would bring forth its fruits, at:

Matthew 21

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

The house of Israel was a testimony of a future house in Christ, explained at: **Hebrews 3**

1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all **his house**.

3 For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

4 For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

5 And Moses verily was faithful in all **his house**, as a servant, **for a testimony** of those things which were **to be spoken after**;

6 But **Christ** as a son over **his own house**; **whose house are we**, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

So we learn that the house of Israel prefigured a spiritual house in Christ, wherein Jew and Gentile are both one on the basis of faith.

Land-Under the old covenant administration, **the land** of Canaan was Israel's inheritance and the place where God would give them rest from all their enemies. **After being delivered from bondage in Egypt, the Lord led them to Kadesh Barnea to enter the land, but Israel rebelled against the Lord.**

We read at: Numbers 14

1 And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

2 And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or **would God we had died in this wilderness!**

3 And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? **were it not better for us to return into Egypt?**

4 And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

6 And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:

7 And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.

8 If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

9 Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.

10 But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

26 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

27 How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, **which murmur against me?** I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

28 Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, **as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:**

29 **Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness;** and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me.

30 Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

31 But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

32 But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness.

33 And **your children** shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and **bear your whoredoms**, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.

34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and **ye shall know my breach of promise.**

35 I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: **in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.**

Many did not enter the land because of unbelief. But for those who would enter the land, God would choose a place where they were to bring their offerings and sacrifices and where He would meet with them.

Deuteronomy 12

5 But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

6 And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:

7 And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.

8 Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.

9 For ye are not as yet come to **the rest** and to the **inheritance**, which the LORD your God giveth you.

10 But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you **rest** from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety;

11 Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:

12 And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.

Under Joshua's leadership, after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, those who survived the wilderness entered the land. After many battles, Israel possessed the land and found rest from their enemies.

Joshua 21

42 These cities were every one with their suburbs round about them: thus were all these cities.

43 And the LORD gave unto Israel **all the land** which he sware to give unto their fathers; and **they possessed it**, and dwelt therein.

44 And the LORD gave them **rest** round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered **all** their enemies into their hand.

45 There failed **not ought** of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; **all** came to pass

Some expositors of scripture argue that this scripture must be understood as teaching that God on his part was faithful, but that the children of Israel did not fully enter into their possession. In support of this argument, they establish certain criteria that must be met for Israel to have possessed the land, and then insist that these criteria have not been met. As mentioned above, this is merely reasoning to a conclusion, rather than accepting the direct testimony of

scripture. The reader must choose between this rationalistic approach to interpreting scripture, and, acceptance of what scripture clearly states. Specific scriptures must be interpreted **in relation to their context and their harmony with other scripture**. This passage in Joshua is **a clear statement that Israel possessed the land**, “there stood not a man of all their enemies before them”, and that “the Lord gave them rest”. “All came to pass”. **God’s essentials for possession of, and rest in the land had been achieved.** (See also, I Kings 4:22-25; 5:2-4; 8:56.

Again, the New Testament scriptures explain that under new covenant administration the spiritual and eternal application of the Old Testament prophecies, in this case the land, is realized in and through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The physical and temporal realities of God’s administration under the old covenant find ultimate meaning in the glory that is in the new covenant. We read at: Hebrews 3

⁵ And Moses verily was faithful in all **his house**, as a servant, for a **testimony** of those things **which were to be spoken after**;

⁶ **But Christ** as a son over **his own house**; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

⁷ Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,

⁸ Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

⁹ When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

¹⁰ Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

¹¹ So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

¹² Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any **of you** an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

¹³ But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

¹⁴ For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

¹⁵ While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

¹⁶ For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

¹⁷ But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

¹⁸ And to whom swore he that they should not enter into **his rest**, but to them that believed not?

¹⁹ So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Hebrews 4

¹ Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

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

3 For we which have believed do enter into **rest**, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my **rest**: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

8 For if (Joshua, margin) had given them **rest**, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

9 There remaineth therefore **a rest** to the people of God.

10 For he that is entered into his **rest**, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of **unbelief**.

This scripture in the Hebrews epistle tells us that under new covenant administration, God chose a place where he would meet with those who believe. This place is in his Son, Jesus Christ, who is heir of all things. When we come to Christ, we have come to the place of rest. Jesus said at: **Matthew 11**

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you **rest**.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find **rest** unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

As we cease from our own works, that are according to the wisdom and energy that is of the flesh, and walk in the enlightenment and empowerment that is of the Spirit, thereby doing the will of God, the fruit of the Spirit is realized. We read at:

Galatians 5

16 This I say then, **Walk in the Spirit**, and ye shall not fulfil **the lust of the flesh**.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and **these are contrary the one to the other**: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye be **led of the Spirit**, ye are **not under the law**.

22 But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance, against such **there is no law**.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us **also** walk in the Spirit.

Instead of the unrest that is characteristic of carnal living, when we walk after the Spirit the peace of God rules in our hearts. **In this regard, we read at:**

Colossians 3

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which **also ye are called** in one body; and be ye thankful.

Circumcision-While under the administration of the Old Testament, circumcision was a physical matter, the apostle Paul explains that it was a sign of the righteousness, which is by faith:

Romans 4

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his **faith is counted** for righteousness.

6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision **only**, or upon the uncircumcision **also**? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

11 And he received the **sign** of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness **of the faith** which he had yet being uncircumcised: **that** he might be the father of **all** them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision **only**, but **who also walk** in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

Paul tells us that under the new covenant circumcision is not outward in the flesh, but rather, circumcision is of the heart in the spirit.

Romans 2

28 For he is **not** a Jew, which is **one outwardly**; neither is that circumcision, which is **outward in the flesh**:

29 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.

On the matter of circumcision, Paul writes to the saints at Colosse:

Colossians 2

11 In whom also ye are **circumcised** with the circumcision made without hands, **in putting off** the body of **the sins of the flesh** by the circumcision of Christ:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

13 And you, being **dead in your sins** and the **uncircumcision of your flesh**, hath he **quicken**ed together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Thus, as with all of the physical and temporal realities in the Old Testament, circumcision has its ultimate meaning realized in the administration of the new covenant. Under the new covenant administration, circumcision is the matter of having the indwelling Holy Spirit who enlightens us through God's word and enables (salvation) us to put off the sins of the flesh-see Romans 8:2; Ephesians 4:20-24.

In conclusion, the New Testament writers are telling us that *all that was under the old covenant administration had its meaning and fulfillment in the Person and work of Christ. All that was before was an example and a shadow*

(Hebrews 8:5; 10:1), *a testimony* (3:5), *a figure* (9:9,24), *and a pattern* (9:23). **The old covenant was physical and temporal. The new covenant is spiritual and eternal. *All that was before, focused on Christ, while all that came after proceeds from Him. All that God purposed with man has its center in, and is realized in and through Christ.***

That the new covenant began with the first advent of Christ and is of unending existence is evident in the scriptures that have been previously cited. There is little controversy over the new covenants being eternal, however, disagreement arises concerning the time when it was instituted and its application to this age. *Scriptures have been cited that show the application of the new covenant to this age and to Israel in particular*, however, a few more scriptures are referenced as follows:

Joel 2

27 And ye shall know that I am in the midst of **Israel**, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

28 And **it shall come to pass afterward**, that I will **pour out my spirit upon all flesh**; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

30 And I will shew wonders **in the heavens** and **in the earth**, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

31 The **sun shall be turned into darkness**, and the **moon into blood**, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come.

32 And it shall come to pass, that **whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered**: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and **in the remnant** whom the LORD shall call.

The New Testament writers explain this prophecy, both, in terms of application and time:

Acts 2

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all **filled with the Holy Ghost**, and began to speak with other tongues, as the **Spirit** gave them utterance.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem **Jews**, devout men, **out of every nation** under heaven.

6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak **in his own language**.

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,
10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,
11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues **the wonderful works of God.**
12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, **What meaneth this?**
13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.
14 But **Peter, standing up with the eleven,** lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and **all ye that dwell at Jerusalem,** be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:
15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.
16 But **this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;**

Peter then quotes that portion of the prophecy of Joel that is referenced above. Some specific points of that prophecy and the New Testament explanation are:

1. This is clear testimony that the event at Pentecost was **the out pouring of the Spirit on all flesh fulfilling this aspect of Joel's prophecy.**
2. "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven". **This is the commencement of the promised re-gathering of Israel. As Peter proclaimed the good news concerning Christ:**
Acts 2

41 Then **they that gladly received his word** were baptized: and **the same day** there were added unto them **about three thousand souls.**

And again, we read at: **Acts 4**

- 1 And as they spake unto **the people,** the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,
- 2 Being grieved that **they taught the people,** and **preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.**
- 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.
- 4 Howbeit **many of them which heard the word believed;** and the number of the men was **about five thousand.**

The apostle Paul has explained the gathering into Christ to include both Jew and Gentile: Ephesians 1

9 Having made known unto us **the mystery of his will,** according to his good pleasure **which he hath purposed in himself:**

10 **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
Ephesians 2

11 Wherefore remember, that ye being **in time past** Gentiles in the flesh, who are called **Uncircumcision** by that which is called the **Circumcision** in the flesh made by hands;

13 But **now** in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes **were far off** are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

17 And came and preached peace to you **which were afar off,** and to them **that were nigh.**

18 For through him **we both** have access by **one Spirit** unto the Father.

3. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered” -Joel 2:32. Paul cites this passage in Joel’s prophecy when he says at: Romans 10

11 For the **scripture** saith, **Whosoever** believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12 For **there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek**: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13 For **whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved**.

Clearly, this point of Joel’s prophecy, as well as the “pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh” had immediate fulfillment at the time of Pentecost and has continuous application during this age.

4. “I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.”-Joel 2:30-31

Scripture, in both Matthew and Revelation, tells us that these *celestial events*, related to time, will occur immediately after the tribulation, and near the beginning of the day of the Lamb’s wrath.

Revelation 6

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14 And the **heaven departed as a scroll** when it is rolled together; and **every mountain and island** were moved out of their places.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from **the wrath of the Lamb**;

17 **For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?**

Matthew 24

29 **Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven**, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see **the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven** with power and great glory.

31 And he shall send his angels with a **great sound of a trumpet**, and **they shall gather together his elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The passage in Matthew informs us of the exact timing of these celestial events prophesied by Joel, which is “immediately after the tribulation of those days”, and is when the day of the Lord comes. The passage in Revelation informs us that the day of the Lamb’s wrath begins when, these celestial events occur, which is, “immediately after the tribulation of those

days". Thus, the commencement of, both, **the day of the Lord**, and **the day of wrath**, is "***immediately after the tribulation of those days***".

While Joel's prophecy is speaking of **events under new covenant administration**, the New Testament scriptures, cited above, explain the **application and timing of the prophesied events**.

Incidentally, these scriptures also teach us that the judgments in Revelation, chapters 6,8,9,11, and 16 are not all "**Tribulation**" judgments, contrary to what is often taught. However, this topic is considered in a study paper entitled "The Book Of Revelation".

Finally, that the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament are **fulfilled to the Jews**, in Christ, and also **include the Gentiles** was declared in **general terms** in the Old Testament is expressed at Romans 15:8-Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister **of the circumcision** for the truth of God, to confirm the promises **made to the fathers**: 9-And that **the Gentiles** might glorify God for his mercy; **As it is written**, For this cause I will confess to thee **among the Gentiles**, and sing unto thy name. 10-And again he saith, Rejoice, ye **Gentiles**, with his people. *The New Testament scriptures referenced in this paper explain, in specific terms, such fulfillment.*