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Israel and Jerusalem

- in history and prophecy -

Who are Israel?

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Last edited: August 14, 2025

Scripture from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

This study was difficult to write because so many have strong feelings concerning the present nation of Israel. I will try to share my views, and they are just that - my views.

The promises and prophecies concerning the coming kingdom under Messiah, were addressed to “Israel.” To understand the coming Kingdom of Messiah, we must define the “Israel” of prophecy - the Israel of Messiah’s kingdom. **Who then is an Israelite?**

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IT DEPENDS ON THE CONTEXT

Genesis 32:28 [The LORD speaking] “And He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

Explaining the concept of “Israel” for those without a background in Biblical history, is difficult because **the meaning changes with the context**. It begins with the man Jacob, whose name the LORD changed to Israel. His descendants were then called “the Children of Israel.” His twelve sons fathered twelve tribes. Others were later joined to the tribes by vow and circumcision, or by marriage to an Israelite male.

One of Jacob’s sons was sold into slavery by his brothers. The LORD watched over Joseph who ultimately became prime minister of Egypt, was reconciled with his brothers, and provided protection and prosperity for his entire family - Israel. Joseph is a TYPE of Christ. The family of Joseph prospered after relocating to Egypt, becoming very numerous. But they stayed too long and were finally enslaved by a new powerful elite. Moses under the direction of the LORD, led the Children of Israel out of Egypt. A mixed multitude of Egyptians and fellow slaves also followed Moses into the wilderness. The larger group was called “the congregation.” It is interesting that the Greek word ekklesia (“congregation”) is translated into most English Bible versions, as “church.”

The LORD promised Abraham (grandfather of Jacob) that his “seed” would one day inherit a land area (thereafter called simply “the land”). That promise was continued to Isaac (whom the LORD chose over Ishmael), then to Jacob (whom He chose over Esau), and then to Jacob’s descendants - the Twelve Tribes. The LORD plainly stated that He “chose” Israel because of His promise to Abraham.

In his letter to the Galatians, The Apostle Paul explains that the promised inheritance of “the land” would be fulfilled through Jesus Christ. He is the one true “Seed” (Galatians 3:16). He will “inherit the land” because He perfectly fulfilled the one condition of the Sinai Covenant - obedience. Those who believe in Him, will share in His inheritance. At the very end of Revelation, we see that the New Jerusalem, when the City descends from Heaven, will cover the land area promised to “Abraham’s Seed.”

Some argue that the promise to Abraham was unconditional. If so, then it was a prophecy, not a covenant (which is a pledge of cooperation between at least two parties). Yeshua Messiah fulfilled the covenant conditions. Obedience was a condition. Physical circumcision of males was a condition.

Genesis 26:4-5 [The LORD speaking to Isaac] “And I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.” (NAS)

ISRAEL DIVIDED

If your **context** is 945BC to 721BC, then “Israel” was the name taken by the 10 Northern tribes, which split away (from the 12) after the death of King Solomon, to form **their own separate nation**. The Southern kingdom was called Judah (so named for the larger of the two remaining tribes). A “Jew” was from the nation of Judah (or Judea). An “Israelite” was a citizen of the North.

The Northern kingdom didn’t last. They turned to idol worship. The LORD divorced them (*Jer 3:8, Isa 50:1*), and the Assyrian army decimated the country in 720BC, scattering the people into slavery throughout the Assyrian Empire. (Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, and Amos were prophets to the Northern Kingdom.) Before the Assyrian destruction, many families fled South - into the territory of Judea. These were merged into the Southern kingdom. After the Northern tribes were destroyed, what remained of “the Children of Israel” was concentrated in Judea. The people of Judea then referred to themselves as “Israelites.”

When the rulers of Judea also turned to idolatry, the LORD allowed the Babylonians to “humble” them. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586BC, and the citizens of Judea were carried into captivity for 70 years. Prophets to the Southern Kingdom included Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk and Obadiah before the captivity. Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied to the exiles in Babylon during the captivity. When a remnant of the captives was allowed to return to “the land” (about 516BC) they called themselves Israelites. Ezra and Nehemiah were leaders of that remnant. Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Joel were prophets to the returned. Even the Jews who chose to remain behind in Babylon, called themselves “Israelites.” The Book of Esther tells one story about those exiles. All of this history is reviewed in the books of Kings and Chronicles.

When finally Yeshua of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem, the Jews of His day called themselves “Israelites,” regardless of where they resided - within the territory of Judah or in the territory of some other nation. They were still descendants of Jacob, and they were still in the bond of “the Covenant” signified by circumcision. Covenant Law, and Covenant promises belonged to them. Your **context** is now the first century of the “Common Era,” otherwise known as AD or CE.

Romans 9:3-5 [Paul writing] “For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. 4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; 5 to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.” (NRS)

Paul is writing some years AFTER the death of Yeshua, and he says the covenants and the promises still belong to Israelites. There is no covenant made with any other nation. Gentile believers are “grafted in” - to Israel. They become Israelites. This is how they can partake of the covenants and the promises. It’s that simple.

Romans 11:1-5 “I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 3 ‘Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars; I alone am left, and they are seeking my life.’ 4 But what is the divine reply to him? ‘I have kept for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’ 5 So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.” (NRS)

“**There is a remnant**” - a small portion left, of Israel. In our last verse, Paul is not saying that all biological descendants of Jacob are still “the chosen” of God. Far from it. Only a small remnant has been preserved by grace - those who are also “of faith.”

Romans 9:6 “It is not as though God's word had failed. For **not all** who are descended from Israel **are Israel**” (NIV).

The LORD has not “cast off” all of the biological descendants. There are still a few of “the chosen” biological descendants left. To that remnant are added (grafted in - adopted) those who believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

“**Cut off**” are those who refused “Him who the LORD has sent” - the prophet like Moses - Yeshua the Son of God (*Acts 3:22-23*).

THE ISRAEL WITHIN ISRAEL

Romans 9:6 “It is not as though God's word had failed. For **not all** who are descended from Israel **are Israel**” (NIV).

Romans 2:28 “A person is **not a Jew** who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical” (NIV).

Having Hebrew DNA is not enough. Physical circumcision is not enough. To be an Israelite - in the eyes of God - one must be circumcised in heart. Only those who truly believe in heart, and whose actions are motivated by this belief, are regarded as Israelites in the sight of God. That makes it about faith - not merely descent. You see, physical circumcision had become the national custom, not necessarily a statement of faith, as it was with Abraham.

Within the Israel (of descent) there was the Israel of faith - an “**Israel**” *within* “**Israel**.” Now you understand why the issue can be so very confusing! When we read a verse, or a prophecy, it’s hard to tell if the prophecy is speaking of DNA Israel, or faith Israel, or both.

When the prophets spoke of future rewards and blessings - they were speaking to the Israel of faith. When they spoke of dire punishments, they were speaking to the Israel of descent only. Prophecy and type, warned that those not “circumcised in heart” would be “broken off” from Israel. Only the Israel of faith would remain. Jeremiah the prophet describes the sifting process.

Jeremiah 3:14 “Return, faithless people’, declares the LORD, ‘for I am your husband. I will choose you – one from a town and two from a clan--and bring you to Zion.” (NIV)

*The remnant of DNA Israel which the LORD would preserve for Himself, **solidly nullifies “Replacement Theology.”***

When Paul said “even at this present time *there is a remnant* according to the election of grace,” he was speaking about DNA Hebrews who also believed - the Israel of faith. To that “remnant” God would add a multitude of **Gentile believers**. They would be “*grafted in*” to the “*Green Olive Tree*.”

Any time you have an identity or a doctrine which is more difficult to explain for those without a good deal of study in the Scriptures, Satan will take advantage, to stir up confusion. I believe that is exactly how Satan will deceive the whole world to serve the Beast and his image. If your understanding of “Israel” is distinctly and concretely linked to those of Hebrew descent - if you make it about race (rather than about faith in God’s only Son), then you are likely to become another victim of Satan’s masterpiece of deception - for the final days.

REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

According to “Replacement Theology” the Children of Israel (DNA descendants) were the chosen people of God, but after they rejected their Messiah, God rejected them as His “chosen.” He left them to their fate. He has now appointed “the church” as his chosen vehicle - to carry forward His plan to preach the gospel, and to baptize those won to His kingdom. Israel (and specifically those of the Jewish race) are no longer the “chosen people” according to this teaching. **The church has replaced Israel as “the chosen.”**

I’ve already told you why **I have rejected this doctrine**. Ever since the resurrection of Yeshua, God has preserved a “remnant” of Hebrew descent - who believe in Him as Savior and Lord. This remnant was NEVER REJECTED! And “Israel” (all of her) was never rejected as the Covenant people of God. Yes. She was “widowed,” when her “husband” died on a cross. But those believing Hebrews were quickly “betrothed” to the risen Christ by the New Covenant. And Gentiles (non-Hebrews) who come to faith, are “grafted in” to Israel. They are ADDED TO Israel.

The name “Israel” means “prevails with God.” ONLY Yeshua Messiah completely and perfectly prevailed with God. We prevail, in and through Him. He is the ONLY “way” to the Father (*John 14:6*).

Replacement Theology is also known as “**supersessionism**.” (The Church “succeeded” Israel.) Some point to this doctrine as the primary source of anti-Semitism during the millennia to follow, from the early church, through Martin Luther’s day, and on through Germany during WWII, to the present worldwide fervor chanting “from the river to the sea.”

Let me just point out that the Apostle Paul did not give up on the Jewish people, and neither should believers in Christ today. Many of Hebrew descent are still won to Christ. Paul wrote that God is able to “graft them in again” **if they do not continue in unbelief** concerning Yeshua as Messiah and Savior (*Romans 11:23*).

DISPENSATIONALISM

Both Replacement Theology and Dispensationalism define “Israel” as those of decent from Jacob. **Both define “Israel” as separate and completely distinct from “the church.”**

Replacement Theology says “the church” has *permanently replaced* Israel as God’s “chosen people.” **Dispensationalism** says “the church” has *temporarily* replaced Israel, for this present Church Age (the Age of Grace). Israel will be restored to “chosen” status after the rapture.

Dispensationalism is a teaching based upon time periods called “ages” or “dispensations.” During each dispensation, God has a different test for human beings. Individuals are “saved” if they pass the test, or live up the standard for the age in which they live. For this present age - the “Church age,” the test is belief in Jesus. If one believes, then he will be “saved” and raptured. During the age from Mount Sinai to the death of Christ, the test was the Law. That age was called the “age of Israel” or the “Age of Law.”

A good visual guide to understanding the ages of Dispensationalism, is the book “Charting the End Times” by Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice.

According to Dispensationalism, Israel was allotted “seventy weeks” to finish her testing (*Daniel 9:24-28*). The death of Christ cut short this time period, by one “week” - seven years. This is called “the postponement theory.” After “the Church” is raptured out of the world, the Jews will go through seven more years of testing (to complete the last “week” of the prophesied seventy) before Christ returns to set up His kingdom. During this last “week,” Jews can be “saved” (once again) by Law keeping, because this “week” is to complete the “Age of Law.”

One wonders about all those Jews who have lived and died since the cross of Christ? They did not live during the “Age of Law.” I guess they just cannot be saved, because they didn’t live during the right “age.”

Paul was adamant that no one was ever saved by keeping the Law (Gal 2:16, Gal 3:10).

I strongly disagree with both Replacement Theology and Dispensationalism.

According to Dispensationalism, after the Church is raptured, the Jews will be tested by the Antichrist for 7 years. Individual Jews may be saved if they keep the Law. Sinai Covenant Law keeping requires a Temple, and animal sacrifices. I strongly believe that a Temple of Yahweh *will be* restored on the Mount in Jerusalem. I believe this is an essential part of Satan's coming deception.

See our study "[A Secret Rapture? - Part II.](#)"

According to John Darby's Rapture doctrine, the Jews (left behind at the Rapture) will restore the Temple on the Mount at Jerusalem. They will offer sacrifices there for 3½ years. Then the evil Antichrist will take over the mount during the final 3½ years. He will stop the sacrifices, and then set up the "abomination that causes desolation" right there at the Temple (*Dan 9:27*). He will set up "the Image of the Beast." See our study: "[The Evil Prince.](#)"

(Mind you. According to Dispensationalism, only Jews will be tested by this trial, because "the Church" has been raptured out of the world. The non-Jews still living on the earth are only there to test the Jews. They are not part of God's church.)

God will punish those who persecute the Jews with great plagues. Finally, at the end of the 7 years, Christ will return (with His Church) to set up His earthly kingdom. He will reign (with Israel) over the nations in peace for 1000 years. The church will come back to earth with Christ at His glorious return but only those of Hebrew descent (Israel) will rule over the nations.

Remember! I reject both Replacement Theology and Dispensationalism.

If you see an opening for Satan in the teachings of Dispensationalism and Replacement Theology, then you're with me. Satan could easily empower a counterfeit Antichrist, to take over the Mount and persecute the Jewish people. He could then bring the Trumpet plagues. (Most folks do not realize that the Trumpets come before the seven last plagues - the bowl plagues.) He could then appear gloriously with "fire from Heaven," acting like Christ come to rescue Israel. How many would realize that he is NOT Christ? He is the great imposter!

NOTE: Dispensationalism takes many forms. I have tried to summarize in a general way. The "Left Behind" fictional series is based upon Dispensationalism.

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THIS AUTHOR'S VIEW

1. **I believe that God's "congregation" (or church) - is Israel.** This "congregation" has always been made up of those who believe in heart, and are Spirit filled, regardless of race. The "church" in the world today, is made up of those who believe in Yeshua the son of Mary, as the Son of God, as Messiah, as Savior and rightful King of Kings. Those who do *not* believe in the Son, cannot prevail with God, because Jesus is the only way to the Father (*John 14:6*).
See our study: "[The Only Way](#)."

The church of faith exists *within* the larger visible church (made up of both wheat and tares). There are many who take the name of Jesus only because it is expected of them or expedient for them, not because they truly believe. They take the name of Jesus only as "fire insurance" - to cover their sins. They have no true repentance. Their actions do not spring from faith. These are not Israelites. They are believers in name only. They *will not* prevail with God.

As societal, educational, and governmental pressures increase for those who call themselves "Christian," many will leave the churches. As born again Israelites discover the truths of the Scriptures (both Old Testament and New Testament), many will choose to leave the main line churches.

The majority of biological descendants from Jacob did not continue in faith. They became branches "broken off because of unbelief" (*Rom. 11:17-20*). In this condition - apart from Christ - they are "cut off" from Israel - "lost sheep" in the eyes of God. But notice – Paul says that "God is able to graft them in again" *if* they do not continue in unbelief (*Rom. 11:23*).

I've been asked many times, whether devout Jews can be saved while rejecting Yeshua the Son of Mary, as Messiah and Lord. I can only quote Moses and Peter.

Deuteronomy 18:18-19 [The LORD speaking to Moses] "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name" (NIV).

Acts 3:22-23 [Peter speaking] "For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that *every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.*'"

Many descendants from Jacob are not knowingly persistent in rebellion against God. They are simply ignorant. They do not see. They do not understand. Their sin can be forgiven. Paul himself had to be "grafted in again" after he met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus.

The fact that a “blindness” and “hardness” has settled over most ethnic descendants of Jacob, is NOT EVER a legitimate reason to reject or to persecute. We are to love all people for the sake of the Gospel of Christ!

Do you see? There is *still* an Israel within “Israel.” There are biological descendants who *do believe* in Yeshua of Natzerati as Messiah and Son of God. There are individuals even within the current geopolitical nation called “Israel,” who believe in Yeshua as Messiah. These individuals are part of the larger “Israel” of faith congregation, which includes all who have come to God the Father through Christ.

2. **God’s “method” of saving individuals from sin**, and Satan’s domination, has always been the same. **We are saved by grace, through faith.** Every sacrifice symbolized the “lamb of God” offered for our salvation. Every priest symbolized Christ, our High Priest now ministering in Heaven. Those living before the death of Christ looked forward in faith to God’s provision of “a sacrifice” (Gen 22:8). Those living since His death look back in faith, when they partake of the bread and the wine - symbols of His broken body and His blood. The reconciliation and justification was and is, effected by the same means - by grace, through faith.

3. No one *has ever* - or *will ever* - be saved through “law keeping” (Gal. 2:16). We cannot “keep” the commandments, any more than the ancient Israelites could keep them, unless Christ first fills us with His own sweet spirit - which is given to us by grace. We have no perfect obedience of our own to present before God. His was the only perfection. We have that perfection - that “robe of righteousness,” only “in Him.”

THE OLIVE TREE

“ADOPTED” AND “GRAFTED IN”

Jeremiah 11:16-17 “The LORD called your name, Green Olive Tree, Lovely and of Good Fruit, with the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are broken.” (See also, Jeremiah 5:10-11.)

Romans 11:13-24 “For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I [Paul] am an apostle to the Gentiles . . .” “If some of the branches [of Israel] were broken off, and you [Gentile believer], being [from] a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them [the natural branches], and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, . . . You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.’ Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith.”

In referring to Israel as the Olive Tree, Paul is pointing his readers to the passage written by Jeremiah the prophet, just before the Babylonian destruction of Judah.

The “root” of the tree “is holy” and “nourishes you.” That “root” is Yeshua Messiah. “We are rooted and grounded in Him” (Colossians 2:6-7; Isaiah 11:10).

The Green Olive Tree is Israel. Paul makes it clear that Gentiles who come to faith in Yeshua as Messiah, are grafted into the Olive Tree. They are made Israelites by Christ - not because of race, but through faith.

Ephesians 2:11-22 [Paul - writing to Gentile believers] “Therefore remember that **you, once** Gentiles in the flesh [*meaning uncircumcised*] . . . **at that time you 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.”

According to Paul, unbelieving Gentiles are without Christ and without God. They are also “aliens” from Israel. Only Israel belongs to the LORD. Israel is the “household of God,” His congregation, His temple, His betrothed bride. The Israel of faith, is “the general assembly and church (*congregation*) of **the firstborn** who are registered in heaven” (*Heb 12:22-24*). The LORD called Israel His “firstborn” (*Exo 4:22*).

Ephesians 2:11-22 (continued) “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off [*as uncircumcised Gentiles*] have been made near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, [*Jews and Gentiles*] and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity . . .

For through Him we both [*Hebrews and non-Hebrews*] have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.”

In the time of Christ, there were only two kinds of people, so far as the Jews were concerned - circumcised law keepers, and uncircumcised Gentiles (also called aliens, strangers, peoples, or nations). Jews regarded themselves as Israelites and everyone else as “unclean” in the eyes of God. (*See Lev. 17:8,10,13; Deut. 24:14; 2Chron. 2:17; Joel 3:17; Jer. 9:16, 10:2, 10:25.*)

In Christ, the “**strangers and foreigners**” are made “fellow citizens” of “**the commonwealth of Israel.**” They become Israelites by faith - “grafted in” and “adopted” by God!

John 10:16 [Yeshua speaking] "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold [*Israel*]; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd."

The "one flock" will be Israel, and the "One Shepherd" - Yeshua Messiah.

Ephesians 3:6 ". . . that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel . . ."

Gentiles who believe, become Israelites - by faith. The one "body" **is, and will be**, "Israel" - Israel redeemed. Which means that "Israel" is made up of people from every race!

NOTE: The "middle wall of division between" Jews and Gentiles is "broken down" in Christ. At the time of Paul's writing, the Temple at Jerusalem was surrounded by a "wall" bearing a sign at each entrance forbidding entrance by any uncircumcised male, on pain of death! This is strong evidence for me, that the Jerusalem Temple no longer retained its place as the center of worship, in God's sight.

Hebrews 13:10 "We (believers) have an altar (*the cross of Christ*), from which those who serve the tabernacle (*the Temple at Jerusalem*) have no right to eat.

The priests and Levites, Pharisees and Sadducee, who clung to the sacrifices and ceremonies at the Temple of Jerusalem as the way to right standing before Yehovah, could "have not right to partake of the One True Sacrifice. Following the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the "true Tabernacle" became the focus of prayer and worship, where Yeshua ministers as High Priest, to represent Israel before His Father.

Hebrews 12:22-24 "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel." (NAS)

THE CHOSEN - THE ELECT

The word translated as "elect" means chosen.

Psalms 4:3 "But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself, him who is godly."

Deuteronomy 7:6 [Moses said to Israel] "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."

Deuteronomy 14:2 [Moses said to Israel] "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

Let's look in the New Testament (Apostolic Writings) to see if "the elect" are still exclusively those descended from Jacob.

Matthew 24:31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Ephesians 1:4 "For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight" (NIV).

Written to the believers (both Hebrew and non-Hebrew) at Ephesus. Here "the chosen" are all of those chosen of God the Father, through Christ.

Revelation 17:14 "They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings-- and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers" (NIV).

Colossians 3:11 "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. 12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;"

Did you get that? In the "elect of God" - the "chosen" - there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile! There is no distinction because it's not about race. It's about faith.

TWO MEANINGS

So we have two definitions for "Israel" - a physical one (circumcised in flesh), and a spiritual one (circumcised in heart). And we have ancient prophecies addressed to "Israel" with meaning or fulfillment on at least these two levels.

Those prophecies which describe punishment and destruction were fulfilled *anciently* upon physical Israel, and upon those nations which persecuted Israel. These same prophecies will be fulfilled *in the future* upon the lost wicked of all ages, and upon the nations of this world who persecuted the people of God.

Those prophecies which describe victory and blessing and peace were fulfilled for faithful Israelites anciently, and they will be fulfilled for greater faith Israel (which includes believing Gentiles - “grafted in”). The “Israel” of Messiah’s coming Kingdom is simply the redeemed people of God (circumcised in heart, and “grafted it”). Her citizens are from every nation, kindred, tongue and people!

Just as the term “Israelite” has more than one definition, the term “Gentile” is used in at least two ways. It may refer simply to one who is NOT physically circumcised OR it may refer to one who is descended from non-Hebrews. The **context** of the Bible passage, determines the meaning.

I do not agree that the term “Gentile” always refers to an unbeliever. In Romans 11:13, Paul wrote “I speak to you Gentiles . . .” He also wrote, “you . . . were graft in” among the natural branches of the Olive Tree (v.17), and “you stand by faith” (v.20). Paul is speaking to believers.

The 24 elders of Revelation 5:8-10, praise God who has redeemed them “out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation” to be “kings and priests” to God. Under the Sinai Covenant, priests were direct descendants of Jacob through his son Levi, and his great, great, grandson Aaron. Yet here are priests of every biological descent. Something has definitely changed!

See our study: “[The Change of the Priesthood](#).”

THE PROMISES

Romans 9:4 [Paul speaking] “. . . Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises . . .”

The promises, and the covenants belong to Israel. It might be well to point out that “the covenants” (each and every covenant promise in Scripture), including the “new covenant,” is made with Abraham or with Abraham’s chosen “seed.”

Romans 4:13-16 “For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. . .”

Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law (*Abrahamic and Sinai Covenant law keepers before Christ came*), but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (*both First and New Covenant believers - regardless of race*).

Only Christ fulfilled the terms of the Sinai covenant - perfect love given to “the LORD thy God” and perfect love for His fellow man. He did this by faith. He was filled with the Spirit of His Father. He is the only one who can rightfully receive the inheritance and the promises of that covenant. Christ is THE Seed of Abraham. He will inherit “the land.” We will share in His inheritance IF we belong to HIM (*Psalms 37:9, Matthew 5:5*).

When we study the prophecies, especially those by First Covenant (*Old Testament*) writers, we must **consider the context** carefully. The term “Israel” may refer simply to circumcised biological descendants of Jacob, OR it may refer to true believers who walk by faith. As used in the Revelation to the Apostle John, the term “Israel” refers to God’s remnant of the faithful (*regardless of race*).

In the prophecies, the term “Gentiles” may refer simply to the uncircumcised OR it may refer to non-believers - the “nations” who “know not God” (*1Thes 4:5, 2Thes 1:8*). Many prophecies have more than one application. The term “Israel” may have a physical application on one level, and a spiritual application on another.

THOSE WHO WERE NOT - NOW ARE!

Hosea 1:10 “Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; And it will come about that, in the place where it is said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ it will be said to them, ‘You are the sons of the living God.’” NAS

Paul applies the words of Hosea to the Gentiles, who would come to faith in Jesus.

Romans 9:24-27 “. . . even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. As He says also in Hosea (*1:10 & 2:19*), ‘I will call those who were not My people, My people, and her who was not beloved, Beloved. And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are Not My people,’ ‘there they shall be called sons of the living God.’”

Israel would become like the stars for multitude, because of all the Gentiles who would be “grafted in.”

Zechariah 2:11 “And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.” (ESV)

THOSE WHO WERE NOT - WILL BE THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

Hosea 2:16 [Spoken to Israel] “And it shall be, in that day, says the Lord, That you will call Me ‘My husband.’ . . . (v.19) “I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in loving kindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD” (v.23). “ . . . Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy. Then I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ And they shall say, ‘You are my God!’”

Revelation 21:9-10 “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” . . . “And he . . . showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”

ISRAEL was betrothed to the LORD.

The New Jerusalem is the bride of Christ.

The gates are named for The 12 Tribes of ISRAEL.

There is NO 13th gate labeled “Gentiles Enter Here.”

Yeshua Messiah is now High Priest over the House of Israel. He represents us in Heaven. How many stones are in His breastplate? Twelve! There is no 13th stone - to represent non-Hebrews.

On the Table of Holy Bread in the Tabernacle, were twelve loaves - one for each tribe. If we are to partake of Christ as our “bread,” we must be *included* in the twelve tribes. There was no 13th loaf, for non-Hebrews.

GATES AND FOUNDATIONS

The New Jerusalem has **12 foundations**, named for **the 12 Apostles**, Christ being the Cornerstone. **The foundation is what you build upon.** The City of Israel victorious - is built upon the foundation laid by those 12 Apostles, NOT that laid by the 12 tribes - their DNA heritage. The message of the Apostles was the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is New Covenant Israel, NOT simply Sinai Covenant Israel. The earthly Jerusalem was only a copy - a TYPE and prophecy, just as the wilderness Tabernacle was a COPY of Heaven itself.

Hebrews 12:18 “For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, . . . [rather] “you have come to Mount Zion and to the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, . . . to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven.”

You have NOT COME to Mount Sinai. You have come to the heavenly Jerusalem.

When you believe in Him, you become part of Him - part of “his body” (*Eph. 1:23, Eph. 5:30*). That is when your name is registered in Heaven as a citizen of The City.

Galatians 3:29 “If you are Christ’s then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Abraham had sons (seed) by Hagar, Sarah, and Keturah - 8 sons in all. Every one went on to father many, many descendants. Yet the New Testament recognizes only one “Seed” - Jesus Christ. If you belong to Him, *then* you are counted as “seed” of Abraham, where “the promises” are concerned. Think about this. An Arab or a Celt or a South African, can also be counted as “seed of Abraham,” IF he belongs to Christ by faith.

The vast majority of Jews presently living worldwide, are NOT faith “sons of Abraham” by the New Testament definition, and are not blessed as such. God cannot legally protect them, because they do not legally belong to Christ. They have not entered into the New Covenant - through Christ. The vast majority are secular. Most do not believe in God - at all. For them, it is about protecting their race. It is not about serving the God of their fathers.

The Jerusalem which is above is called “the mother of us all” (*Galatians 4:26*). If she is our “mother” that means she existed before we did. Think about that! The Jerusalem on earth was only a copy or TYPE. All those who have entered into the New Marriage Covenant and are betrothed to Christ by faith, have become citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, *and citizens* of Israel Redeemed.

Abraham “looked for a City whose builder and maker is God” (*Hebrews 11:10*). John the Apostle, in the last book of the New Testament, describes the 144,000 (of all the tribes of Israel) “standing on Mount Zion.” We just read Hebrews 12:18, which says “you have come to Mount Zion and to the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” Put these together. I believe the 144,000 of Revelation 14:1, will be those “in Christ” who “have come” to Mount Zion, who will stand at the last day.

CLAIMING THE COVENANT PROMISES

I have a little book called “Promises.” It contains all of the promises of the Bible. Many are quoted from The Psalms, Jeremiah, Isaiah and other Old Testament books. If I were to look back at the context of those promises, I would find that they were spoken to Israel, and were based upon the Covenant with Abraham, yet they are presented in my little book, so that I may claim those promises for myself. But I am not a Hebrew by descent. How can I claim those promises? Praise Him! I *am* in covenant - an Israelite “adopted” and “grafted in” (*Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6, Romans 11:17*). Those promises belong to me.

New Testament believers love to quote Christ's words, "I am the vine. You are the branches." But don't forget. "The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel" (*John 15:5, Isaiah 5:7*). If you are drawing life from Christ, then you *are* an Israelite!

ISRAEL: DEFINITIONS in different time periods and contexts

1. The man Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (*Gen. 32:28*).
2. Biological descendants of the man Israel - The Twelve Tribes.
3. The 10 Northern tribes which split off under Rehoboam, after the death of Solomon.
(*The 2 Southern tribes were called Judah.*)

Though most of the people from these tribes were later killed or carried away by Assyria, individuals from the North who remained faithful to Yehovah, will someday be resurrected and "returned to their land." Many from the North fled South to Jerusalem, ahead of the Assyrian invasion. At that time, Jerusalem was spared.

4. The remnant of Judah, returned from Babylonian captivity, and their descendants.
Paul called himself an Israelite - of the Tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11:1).
5. Those descendants of Jacob who had a heart for God.
Jesus called Nathanael "an Israelite indeed" (John 1:47).
6. All who have entered by faith, in to the New Covenant with God thru Jesus Christ
(*Ephesians 2*).
7. Christ Himself - the One who perfectly prevails with God (*Hosea 11:1 & Matt. 2:15*).
The name Israel means "prevails with God."

Each one of the above definitions can be correctly applied. **The context determines which definition is correct within a particular passage.** Most especially remember that in ancient prophecy, the LORD may be speaking on two levels - a physical or temporal level (to a nation) and a spiritual level. BOTH apply. He may also be speaking to Israel at two different time periods - a repeating or dual prophecy.

THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL

Romans 11:26 “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob, For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”

“Israel” (here in Paul’s letter) includes every person of faith - and only persons of faith - who have entered into covenant with God through Christ, who are humble at heart and strive to obey God.

Some teach that *all* physical descendants of Jacob will eventually be saved. I cannot agree. Most (*not all*) of those who led Israel in the worship of the golden calf (*Exo. Chpt 32*), Nadab and Abihu who offered “strange fire” and died in the “fire” of God Himself (*Lev. Chpt 10*), Korah, Dathan, and Abiram who led a rebellion against Moses with 250 princes (*Num. Chpt 16*), Achan who took forbidden goods from Jericho (*Joshua Chapter 7*), and those who sought the death of Jesus - are just a few of those who rebelled against God, and were “cut off” from the people.

Romans 9:27 “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved.”

“The remnant” is what’s left - a small portion of the original whole.

Some teach that only those of biological descent will be drawn to Jesus Christ, and thus be saved. Those with only Gentile DNA are not of the “chosen” and will feel no drawing of the Spirit. Really? I have no discernible genetic connection with any tribe of Israel. Yet I definitely felt drawn to Christ. “God so loved the world . . . that whosoever believes in Him might . . . have everlasting life” (*John 3:16*).

John 12:32 [Jesus said] “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

Others teach that biological descendants of Jacob will receive special place and honor in Messiah’s coming kingdom on earth. According to this teaching, they will rule over all other nations during the millennium. They will be the teachers of the law. They will be the priests, and the judges. I CANNOT AGREE with this teaching either. **God rewards faith - not biological descent.**

The message of Revelation 2:26 was spoken to Christ’s church, not to those specifically of Jewish lineage. “To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations” (NIV). According to Revelation 20:6, all those who are resurrected at the return of Christ will become “priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Do you really believe that only those of Hebrew lineage will be resurrected at the Glorious Return? 1Corinthians 15:22-23 says all who belong to Christ, will be raised at His coming.

Galatians 3:29 [Paul] "There is neither Jew nor Greek [Gentile] . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

I recently read the book "When a Jew Rules the World" by Joel Richardson. He believes that biological descendants of Jacob (along with grafted in Gentile believers) will one day rule the world under Jesus Christ as their King. So far, I can agree with Richardson.

*Where I strongly disagree with Richardson, is in regard to the timing of Christ's reign over "the nations." Richardson believes this earthly rule will take place during the upcoming 7th millennium. **I believe this earthly rule will take place during the 8th millennium.***

1. No life will survive the last plagues. See our study: "[Trumpets and Bowls](#)."
2. Desolation is rest (Lev. 26:33-35). The earth will rest in desolation. Jeremiah described his vision of the earth, after the Day of the LORD. "It was without form, and void" (Jeremiah 4:23).
3. According to Revelation 20:5, "the rest of the dead" will be resurrected to continue their lives at the 8th millennium, (not the 7th) to learn of Him and then to choose whom they will serve. See our study: "[The 8th Day](#)."
4. For 40 years, during the wilderness wandering, no manna fell on the 7th Day. This was a prophecy. Christ is "the bread from heaven." He is the "manna." During the 7th - or Sabbath millennium, there will be no presence of Christ on the earth.
5. During the 7th or sabbatical year, Israelites were commanded NOT to sow their fields, and NOT to harvest any crops. These commands were prophetic. When Jesus said, "The fields are ripe for the harvest" (Matt. Cpt 9 & 13), He was not speaking of physical crops. He was speaking of souls to be gathered for the kingdom. This means the redeemed will NOT "sow" or "harvest" for the kingdom, during the 7th millennium. They WILL "**sow**" **again in the 8th year** (the 8th millennium), after "the rest of the dead" are raised to "live again."
6. Those from "the first resurrection" will become "priests of God and of Christ." In the ancient prophetic type, the consecration of priests lasted 7 days. Aaron and his sons began their ministry as priests on the 8th day. This was a prophecy. The coming priesthood must complete the 7th millennial consecration, to begin their ministry as "priests of God and of Christ," at the 8th millennium.
7. "With the LORD a thousand years is as a day, and a day is as a thousand years" (2Peter 3:8).

*If you believe that Christ will return in glory to reign - at the beginning of the upcoming 7th millennium, you will be looking for this, and expecting this. **I believe the teaching of a 7th millennial reign on the earth, is preparing believers to worship Antichrist, who will make it appear that he** has fulfilled every prophecy (including the overthrow of an Antichrist - most likely Muslim) and **is Christ come.***

Revelation 5:8-10 [The twenty four elders sing to the Lamb.] “For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”

These priests are NOT all biological descendants of Jacob, much less of Levi and Aaron.

A NEW COVENANT WITH ISRAEL & JUDAH

Hebrews 8:8-10 “for this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (*Hebrews 10:15-17, Jeremiah 31:31-33, Ezekiel 36:22-29, Ezekiel 11:16-20*).

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews is quoting from Jeremiah and from Ezekiel. In the prophecy of Ezekiel, “**the whole House of Israel**” is first resurrected. Then Israel and Judah are joined together again - as one nation - never to be parted. The context of Ezekiel 36 makes it very clear that the New Covenant will not be fully realized until the Israel of God has been resurrected, gathered, joined together, and finally settled “in their own land.” This does not happen UNTIL after the Second Coming.

For now - we are betrothed by the New Covenant to the risen Son of God. The wedding feast has not yet taken place, nor yet the consummation. We have the promise, and we have the indwelling spirit as His confirmation.

Most importantly, the Israel of God includes all those “grafted in” by faith in Messiah!

CONCLUSION

New Covenant Israel - the Israel of prophetic promise - represents and includes all of those faithful to God and to His Son - irrespective of race, kindred or genetic descent.

*We pray this study will prove a blessing.
Prophecy Viewpoint*

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Grafted In, "Israel, Gentiles, and the Mystery of the Gospel, Second Edition,"
by Thomas Lancaster, First Fruits of Zion, 2009

Go to **Part One** of this series - "[Temples of Yahweh.](#)"

Go to **Part Three** of this series - "[Ezekiel's Temple.](#)"

Go to **Part Four** of this series - "[The Temple of Antichrist.](#)"

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