

Session 7: The Cross, New Covenant, and the Gentiles ***Faith, Hope, and Love: Rediscovering the Essentials of Christianity*** **Joshua Hawkins – www.joshuahawkins.com**

Review

In 6BC, Rome was ruling over Israel through Herod. There was no Davidic king on the throne, the LORD was not dwelling in the Temple, the land was not theirs, and it seemed as if God had abandoned His people and promise to restore all things. But God had not abandoned His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary of Nazareth and spoke words of hope for the people of Israel. A child would come from her loins who would be *the son of God* – He would reign over Israel on the throne of David in Jerusalem *forever*, just as God had promised to David.

Several decades later, in the midst of centuries of prophetic silence, John the Baptist takes center stage in the midst of God's *elect* nation Israel. Citing his identity from Isaiah 40 as a voice in the wilderness, John was preparing the people of Israel for the coming of their God.

John's message to Israel was abrasive in several ways. First, he said that Jews could not rely on their ethnicity to guarantee them participation in God's promises to their ancestor Abraham. Physical descent from Abraham did not mean that a Jew was a true child of Abraham. Second, John said that the axe was laid to the root of the trees (drawing from Isaiah 6), and the One whom he was preparing the way for would *divide* the nation and leave only a stump (a believing remnant) behind. Some Jews would be *wheat* and some would be *chaff*. The wheat would receive the promised Holy Spirit but the chaff would be subject to the fiery baptism of judgment. The latter was unthinkable for a Jew, because they believed the "merits of the fathers" ensured their safety from God's eschatological wrath (Isaiah 66). Third, John was *baptizing* and proclaiming an urgent message of repentance to Israel, essentially telling Jews that they must "convert" and join God's covenant people. The window of decision would only be open for a short time, and the outcome of the decision that each Israelite made during that window would not be evident until the time of the harvest (as Jesus refers to often in his parables as "the end of the age"). Just as He had done throughout history, God was winnowing down the people and clarifying who would inherit the promises.

John's ministry was authenticated when Jesus - the Lamb of God, the son of God, and the LORD of glory Himself - submits to his baptism. Jesus comes out of the waters of the Jordan and the Spirit descends upon Him, designating Him as the *son of God*. Jesus' representative temptation in the wilderness also showed Him to be the *son of God*.

Predicting His Suffering

1. From the very beginning of His ministry, the followers of Jesus believed that He was Israel's long-awaited king, just as Gabriel (Luke 1:26-38), Mary, John the Baptist (John 1:34), Simeon (Luke 2:25-32), Anna (Luke 2:36-38), and others did. As prophesied, Israel's final Davidic king would have a throne and kingdom that would endure forever. Under the kingdom of David's son, Israel would prosper and the nations would be *blessed* just as God had promised in His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

“He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ) ... Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” ... Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!””
(John 1:41, 45, 49 ESV)

2. While much could be said about “messianic expectation” in the first century, Scripture itself declares that, in context to the story of Israel, God would raise up a king and kingdom that would crush every other kingdom and would stand *forever* (Daniel 2:44; Daniel 7:14). If Israel's Davidic king had arrived, surely the people of Jesus' day must have believed in some measure that Rome's overthrow, Israel's restoration, and the promised blessings of the age to come were all imminent.
3. As Jesus boldly proclaimed the coming kingdom and held fast to His claims of being the Messiah and the LORD Himself, the Gospels often narrate challenges to his identities:
 - a. The people ask for *signs* to prove Jesus' claims (Mark 8:11-12; John 2:18; John 6:29-30)
 - b. The people no longer follow Jesus when His demands are seemingly too difficult (Luke 18:18-23; John 6:60-66)
 - c. The people want to stone Jesus to death (John 8:59; John 10:31)
 - d. The Jewish authorities try to catch Him in His words (Matthew 22:41-46)
 - e. Jesus Himself would silence voices from declaring who He was as the Christ (Matthew 16:20) or avert obvious opportunities of gaining favor before people (John 6:15)
4. Despite these and many other challenges, the Twelve disciples remain faithful to Him when most of His followers abandon Him. Yet nothing shakes

their belief that Jesus is *the Messiah* more than His predictions of His own death (Matthew 16:21; 17:22; 20:18). Surely the Messiah was to rule over Israel *forever* (John 12:34) per God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7. If Jesus of Nazareth really was the anticipated final king of Israel, why is He now vehemently talking about his certain death? What did this mean for Israel and the promised Davidic kingdom from God?

“He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.” ... Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.””
(Matthew 16:15–22 ESV)

5. Many had hoped that Jesus was “the one to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:21), but God had not delivered Him (Matthew 27:43). He had been forsaken (Matthew 27:46) and crucified by the Romans. Even worse, Jesus had been humiliated by God Himself, because “anyone hung on a tree is under God’s curse” (Deuteronomy 21:23).
6. The theological importance of Jesus’ death is enormous. As we seek to rightly understand the main reasons for Jesus’ death, we must not forget the context of the broader story of Israel and of mankind. The concepts of *sin*, *sacrifice*, and *atonement* must be rooted in the story developed from Genesis 3 onward and not merely lifted from that context and placed in our modern, Platonic gospel story and timeline.

Sacrifice, the Crucifixion, and the Day of the LORD

1. While our hearts are meant to be overwhelmed by what we behold at Calvary, *the New Testament does not give us the impression that our intellects should be*. Though much has been written, we must maintain our confidence in the simplicity and accessibility of the cross of Jesus.
2. Perhaps one of the most common, straightforward questions we have when approaching the cross is: *why did Jesus have to die?* How could the Holy One of God be condemned as a criminal? As angels announced His birth, how is it that we find the long-awaited seed and king of Israel pierced and bloody on a Roman cross? And how could we find the Creator and

Sustainer of all hanging from torn flesh and struggling for breath? As we have done with other parts of the story we have developed, we must begin to formulate an answer by drawing on Genesis, the Law, and the Prophets – but in moving forward to look at those things, we must not leave with our hearts unmoved.

3. In the garden-sanctuary of Eden, God’s command was broken (*sin*). God, grieved by the transgression (*anger/wrath*), had promised consequences for disobedience (*judgment*), and cursed man to return to the dust from which he was taken (*recompense*). As we have discussed at length, God did not leave His good creation without hope. The promise of *the seed* and *the restoration of all things* is developed through the story of Israel and the covenants God makes with that group of people. It is only because of His *mercy* and *grace* that descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (and all of humanity at large) are preserved and continue to this day.

“The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.””

(Exodus 34:6–7 ESV)

“But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now.”

(2 Kings 13:23 ESV)

“The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.”

(Psalms 145:8–9 ESV)

“and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.”

(Joel 2:13 ESV)

4. As we have discussed, the Law was given to Israel and included a *sin-bearing system of sacrifice* so that sin could be removed and God could dwell among Israel. The sacrificial system and the Temple stood as a

witness for God's provision to restore relationship and dwelling for all of humanity that was lost at the fall.

Israel's inception as a nation was based upon a ratification sacrifice (cf. Ex. 24:4-8), and its maintenance in righteousness was contingent upon its faithfulness to the sacrificial system (cf. Ex. 29:38-42; Lev. 1-7; Num. 28-29). Sacrifices were offered "day by day" (Ex. 29:38; Num. 28:3; cf. Dan. 12:11; Heb. 7:27; 10:11), "morning and evening" (1 Chr. 16:40; 2 Chr. 13:11; Eze. 3:3), on the Sabbath (Lev. 23:38; Num. 28:9-10; Eze. 46:4), on new moons (Num. 10:10; 28:11-15; 2 Chr. 31:3), and at all the yearly festivals (Ex. 23:18; 34:25; Lev. 23:37; Num. 29:39).¹

5. The multitude of sacrifices pointed towards the Day of Atonement, the most important day in the religious calendar of Israel, and it remains to date the highest of holy days in Judaism. Referred to simply as "the day" or "the great day" from the late Second Temple period², Yom Kippur is "the cultic climax" of Israel's year. It demands such reverence because it epitomizes all the sacrifices made throughout the year "to make atonement for the people of Israel once in the year for all their sins." (Leviticus 16:34)
6. Yet along with the sin-bearing sacrificial system in the Law were covenantal promises for blessing for obedience and promises of curse and wrath for disobedience. Israel's prophets often spoke of a climactic day called *the Day of the LORD*, where God would punish the transgressors of the Law, reward the obedient, and bring forth the covenantal promises and blessings. Standing in contrast to all the "days of man" since the fall, the Day of the LORD would vindicate the covenantal faithfulness of the God of Israel before His people and all of the nations.
7. As we have seen through the message of John the Baptist and the words of Jesus Himself, Israel was not exempt from the coming wrath on unrighteousness. Their history is pervaded with Law-breaking and covenantal unfaithfulness. Possession of the Law, the sin-bearing sacrificial system, and "the merits of the fathers" did not provide them with sufficient *righteousness* to inherit the promises of the covenant. Unless their righteousness exceeded that of the perfect Law-keepers (the scribes and Pharisees), they would not be a part of the everlasting kingdom of David's seed and would be subject to the baptism of fire on the Day of the LORD.

"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

¹ Harrigan, John, *The Gospel of Christ Crucified*, Chapter 7, p. 24. Pulled from www.gospelofchristcrucified.com/book.html

² See John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1998), 219-20.

(Matthew 5:20 ESV)

8. God saw His chosen people Israel's plight and, in His mercy, sent forth His son as a superior *sin-bearing, substitutionary sacrifice*. Instead of the shedding of the blood of bulls and goats, the blood of Jesus became Israel's Passover blood (1 Corinthians 5:7). Those who applied *His* blood in faith would be saved from the wrath of the Day of the LORD.
9. At this point it must again be remembered that the cross of Jesus does not stand in isolation but is part of the larger story of God's covenant faithfulness to Israel and His desire to *bless* all of the nations through His chosen people. Jesus is *the image of God* (Colossians 1:15), *the righteous seed of Abraham* (Galatians 3:16), the one to whom the promises were made. Those joined to Him by faith would inherit the promises made to Abraham.

**“For I tell you that Christ became a servant [referencing the “servant” of Isaiah 42-53] to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs”
(Romans 15:8 ESV)**

**“And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him— for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength— he says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.””
(Isaiah 49:5–6 ESV)**

**“Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.”
(Galatians 3:16 ESV)**

10. The New Testament is rich with reference to the typology of sacrifice. John the Baptist warned people to “flee from the wrath to come” (Matthew 3:1-12; Luke 3:1-17) and had prophesied that Jesus was the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29, 36), a clear reference to the Passover lamb and other sacrificial lambs. The apostles often reference “the blood of Christ” (1 Cor. 10:16; Eph. 2:13; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19; cf. 1 Cor. 11:27; Heb. 10:19; 1 Jn. 1:7; Rev. 7:14; 12:11), a clear sacrificial reference. The preaching of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus is also a sacrificial reference (Acts 2:38; 5:51; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18), because “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” (Hebrews 9:22)

11. Yet the cross was a stumbling stone for Israel (Romans 9:32-33). Their prophesied king had suffered at the hands of the Romans and died without delivering them from oppression and bringing the promises to pass. As they inflexibly clung to the Law as their righteousness before God, they failed to recognize that it was merely a tutor to keep them dependent and point them to their need for a better righteousness. Mere external obedience would not grant them the promises. *Faith* was required.

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.”

(John 5:39–40 ESV)

“Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.”

(Galatians 3:24 NASB)

“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

(Romans 8:3–4 ESV)

12. Thus the mercy shown on the cross has real “meat” to it because of a concrete future day where God will judge Israel and all the other nations through Jesus (Acts 17:31).

“Enter into the rock and hide in the dust from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendor of his majesty. The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low;”

(Isaiah 2:10–12 ESV)

“And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

(Acts 10:42–43 ESV)

Jesus as the Divine Savior

1. Not only was Jesus the sinless *son of God*, but He was the very God of Israel. He alone created all things, and therefore rules and judges all things. Because of His identity, He alone can pardon or forgive. This is well-established by many Old Testament passages:

**“I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.”
(Isaiah 43:11 ESV)**

**““I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.”
(Isaiah 43:25 ESV)**

**“Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I formed you; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me. I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you.”
(Isaiah 44:21–22 ESV)**

**“Therefore they shall be like the morning mist or like the dew that goes early away, like the chaff that swirls from the threshing floor or like smoke from a window. But I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior.”
(Hosea 13:3–4 ESV)**

2. From the beginning of His life, Jesus was known and proclaimed as *Savior* by men and angels. Jesus used the height of His power as God to accomplish salvation for His people. This is clearly witnessed throughout the New Testament.

**“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior,”
(Luke 1:47 ESV)**

**“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”
(Luke 2:11 ESV)**

**“The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.””
(Acts 5:30–32 ESV)**

“And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’ Of this man’s offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.”

(Acts 13:22–24 ESV)

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,”

(Philippians 3:20 ESV)

“for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

(1 Timothy 2:2–4 ESV)

“Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.”

(Titus 1:1–4 ESV)

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”

(Titus 2:11–15 ESV)

“Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

(2 Peter 1:10–11 ESV)

**“By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”
(1 John 4:13–15 ESV)**

3. Jesus is seen forgiving sins in the Gospels. Again, this is something only God Himself could do.

**“And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, “Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic— “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.””
(Mark 2:5–11 ESV)**

**“Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.””
(Luke 7:47–50 ESV)**

4. Israel’s God had personally come and appealed to them to repent, but they crucified Him instead. Generation after generation, Israel has cried "shine the light of Your face upon us", yet they hid their faces (Isaiah 53:3) and turned away their gaze when God shone forth the light of His glory in the face of Christ. This is indeed the condemnation of the whole world - that the light has come and men have loved darkness rather than the light.

Suffering Before Glory

1. The four Gospels finish their story of Jesus’ passion (his death) by announcing Jesus’ glorious resurrection from the dead. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus and gave a simple, straightforward explanation of *why* “it was necessary for the Christ to suffer” before He sits in Jerusalem and establishes His glorious

kingdom (Luke 24:26; cf. Romans 8:17-18; Hebrews 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:11; 4:13; 5:1).

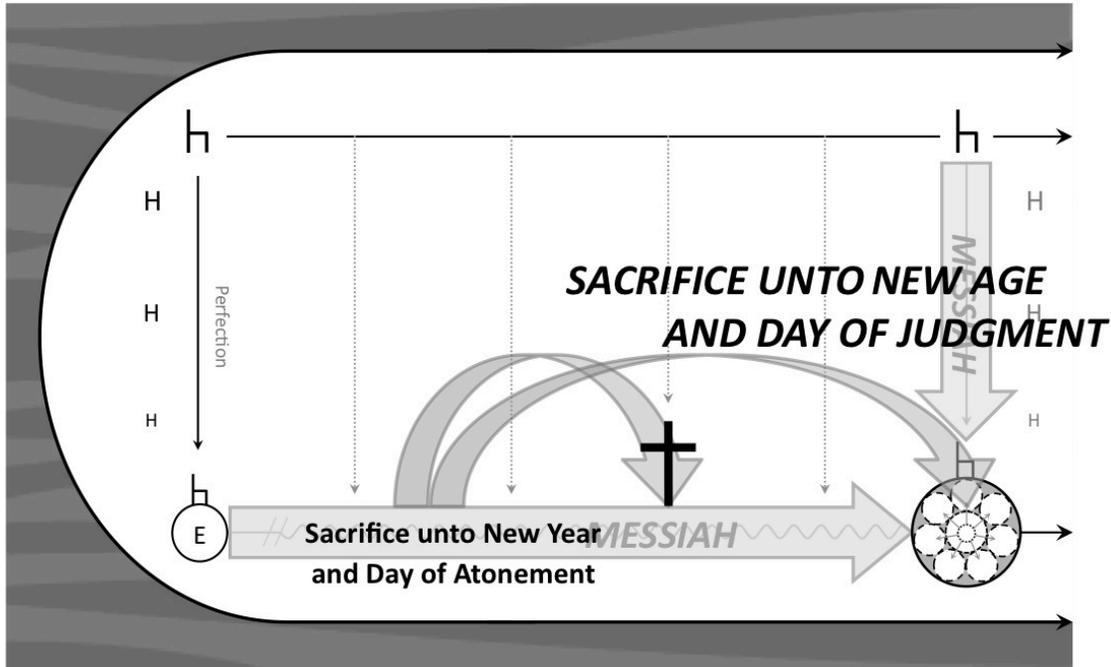
“And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”
(Luke 24:25–27 ESV)

2. Jesus later appeared to the Eleven and “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45), which was “everything written in about [Him] in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44). Based upon later themes in the New Testament, we can infer Jesus discussed direct prophecies about His suffering as well as sacrificial typology.
3. Isaiah 53 is the most referenced passage in the New Testament that directly spoke of the suffering of Jesus (Matthew 8:17; Mark 9:12; Luke 22:37; John 12:38; Acts 8:32-35; Romans 10:16; 15:21; 1 Peter 2:22-25). Jesus also foretells his own death during the Last Supper according to Isaiah 53:12, “For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’” (Luke 22:37) Earlier, he told His disciples that he “must suffer many things and be rejected” (Luke 9:22, echoing Isaiah 53:3).

Likewise, when John the Baptist referred to Jesus as “the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (Jn. 1:29, cf. v. 36), Is. 53:6-7 would have been readily apparent: “the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all... like a lamb that is led to the slaughter”. So also before his accusers Jesus “remained silent” (Mk. 14:61) and “made no reply” (Mk. 15:5, NIV), recalling Is. 53:7, “like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.” These circumstances surrounding Jesus’ innocent and humiliating death, in light of Isaiah 53, became the primary backdrop for the early church’s witness that “it was necessary for the Christ to suffer” (Acts 17:3), and “God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer.” (Acts 3:18, NIV)³

4. Additionally, the typological pattern of daily/yearly/repeated special sacrifices culminating in the Day of Atonement looks forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus before the Day of the LORD and the age to come.

³ Harrigan, John, *The Gospel of Christ Crucified*, Chapter 7, p. 5. Pulled from www.gospelofchristcrucified.com/book.html



Typological Fulfillment of the Sacrificial System

5. It is critical to understand that Jesus' death and resurrection did not *redefine* or *rework* the promises made through Israel's prophets. Though further clarity was brought concerning who would inherit those promises (just as God had done throughout Israel's history), we can be certain that the time of the restoration of all things did not begin (Acts 3:19-21), the resurrection of the dead and the Day of the LORD did not come (2 Timothy 2:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3), and the promised Davidic kingdom was not established (Acts 1:6-7). All of these events promised to Israel through the Law and the Prophets have been "made more certain" (2 Peter 1:19). Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we can know without question they will come to pass in the future. As the author of Hebrews makes clear to Jews seeking to understand what the Scriptures were saying about Jesus:

"And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."
(Hebrews 9:27-28 ESV)

6. Just as Isaiah 53 directly indicates Jesus' suffering, the passage concludes with the glory of his resurrection: "After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied" (v. 11, NIV). Out of this, the verses following (through Isaiah 54) go on to describe the glory of Jerusalem, which is one of the most referenced chapters in Revelation 21. Indeed, the same Jesus that was raised from death and ascended into heaven "will come in the same way

you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). At that time, he will “restore the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6) and bring to pass the restoration of Jerusalem and everything that the prophets spoke about from long ago (Acts 3:19-21).

“For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day [in context, the messianic glory]. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.”
(Luke 17:24–25 ESV)

7. As the apostles began to proclaim the truth of Jesus after His ascension, they sought to establish that the story of His crucifixion was not a departure from the Old Testament narrative of Israel and their God, but an extension of it.

“Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.”
(1 Peter 1:10–12 ESV)

““And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.”
(Acts 3:17–18 ESV)

“And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.””
(Acts 17:2–3 ESV)

“To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.””
(Acts 26:22–23 ESV)

Peter's Sermon on the Day of Pentecost

1. The book of Acts recounts the stories and sermons of those who witnessed His resurrection and ascension. Like the cross, much has been written about these events. Yet again within the context of the story we have been looking at, the theological import of both Jesus' resurrection and ascension is exceedingly broad in implication but simple and straightforward in meaning.
2. The very first (and arguably the most important) sermon we have recorded is Peter's in Acts 2. One hundred and twenty had gathered in Jerusalem, tarrying as Jesus had instructed them. Suddenly, on the day of the feast of Pentecost, a loud wind is heard and the Holy Spirit comes and rests on each of them. The noise attracts the attention of the Jews in the city for the feast, and many gather to the place where the commotion was heard. The 120 begin *prophesying* of the works of God in various languages, and Peter stands up to address the crowd, who supposed they were drunk.
3. Peter begins to answer the crowds' question "*what does this mean?*" by quoting Joel 2:28-32. Both the setting and the Biblical context of Peter's quote *must not be overlooked*.

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

(Acts 2:17–21 ESV)

4. First, we know that this event happened on the *Day of Pentecost*. Pentecost was one of three feasts (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles) all of Israel was required by God to celebrate (Deuteronomy 16:9; Leviticus 23:10). Pentecost was also called the feast of “first fruits”, when Israel would gather the first of their crops and present/consecrate them to God. In doing so, they anticipated the final harvest at the end of the season, which was to be celebrated with the Feast of Tabernacles (also called the Feast of Ingathering).
5. Israel's feasts relate to God's plan of salvation and the Apostles often used the term "first fruits" this way, in its relationship and connection to (and

therefore an *anchor* and *guarantee* of) the "full ingathering" or rest of the harvest.

6. Second, the context of Joel 2 (and parallel passages about the LORD pouring out His spirit like Ezekiel 39:25-29) indicates that the LORD will pour out His spirit on all the people of Israel *after* He restores them to their land permanently, vindicates His name in the sight of all of the nations, and fulfills His covenantal promises to them. *These things did not happen at the cross/resurrection and are still yet future.*

"You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame. And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;"
(Joel 2:27-28 ESV)

"Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore. And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD."
(Ezekiel 39:28-29 ESV)

7. Therefore, Peter is interpreting the giving of the Spirit to 120 Jews in context to Pentecost, as a *first fruits* and *guarantee* that when the LORD brings His people back to the land and no longer hides His face from them, *all Israel* will receive the Spirit and will prophesy, just as the prophets had promised. This is why the New Testament subsequently applies the language of "first fruits" or "guarantee" to the Spirit:

"And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."
(Romans 8:23 ESV)

"In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."
(Ephesians 1:13-14 ESV)

8. It is important to recognize that Peter *continues* with his answer to the crowds' question after quoting Joel 2. The 120 Jews received the "first fruits" of the Spirit because *they had rightly responded to Jesus' identity and*

had borne the fruits of repentance. Peter goes on to talk about two important things *happened to Jesus* that reveal two important things about *who He is*.

9. First, Peter says that God raised Jesus from the dead, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it. He quotes Psalm 16 as proof:

“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him, “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.”

(Acts 2:24–28 ESV)

10. The “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), and it was not possible for Jesus to be held by death *because He never sinned*. He was “a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Peter 1:19), the sinless *son of God*, the *righteous* seed of David. Therefore, death had no dominion over Him (Romans 6:9).
11. Peter says that Jesus’ resurrection proves that He is the *messiah*, the king promised to sit on David’s throne and rule the nations from Jerusalem *forever*. Peter’s logic is simple: in order to have a *kingdom that endures forever*, it necessitates a *king that lives forever*.

“Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.”

(Acts 2:30–32 ESV)

12. Peter continues his explanation as to why 120 Jews received the Spirit by saying that Jesus was not only raised from the dead, but also *exalted to the right hand of God*, proving His divinity:

“Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

(Acts 2:33–35 ESV)

13. While often conflated as one movement or event, Jesus' *resurrection* is very different from His *ascension*. His resurrection proves that He is Israel's *messiah* and will reign from Jerusalem, but His ascension proves that He is Israel's *God*. By saying that Jesus poured out the Spirit (something that Joel says Yahweh will do – Joel 2:28) and by saying that He sits at God's right hand, sharing the divine throne in the heavens, Peter is saying that Jesus is the *LORD*.

“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”
(Acts 2:36 ESV)

14. Though the Jews crucified their LORD and Messiah, they could *call on the name that Jesus has and be saved*:

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
(Acts 2:21 ESV)

“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ... And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”
(Acts 2:37–38, 47 ESV)

15. From the very beginning of the Christian movement, Jesus was proclaimed as *LORD* and *Christ*. The rest of the book of Acts narrates the witnesses of Jesus' resurrection proving that He is indeed who He said He was, and how He still was showing faithfulness to His covenants with His people Israel. Though most in Israel had hardened their hearts against Him and rejected Him, the story was still in motion with a righteous remnant, just as the prophets had spoken.

16. In 70AD, the Romans destroy the Temple in Jerusalem and Jews are scattered abroad, just as Jesus had prophesied. Their rejection of Him was met with the severe covenantal curses of destruction and exile.

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear

you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.
(Luke 19:41–44 ESV)

Understanding the New Covenant

1. It is clear from the New Testament authors that the Jewish people who had responded to Jesus' coming with repentance were in *exile*, away from the land and in a period of sojourning as they eagerly waited for Jesus' return (1 Peter 1:13; 2:11-12). The nation would grow again outside of the land, and covenant breaking would continue. However, Israel's exile would not last forever. After a final period of chastisement for covenant breaking (often called "Jacob's Trouble" – Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:7), God would regather His people to the land and plant them there forever, fulfilling His promise to Abraham.

“Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom (Israel, v. 7), and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground, except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,” declares the LORD. “For behold, I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall to the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, ‘Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.’”
(Amos 9:8–10 ESV)

““What is in your mind shall never happen—the thought, ‘Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone.’ “As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out I will be king over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, declares the Lord GOD. I will make you pass under the rod (cf. Leviticus 27:32), and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me. I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.”
(Ezekiel 20:32–38 ESV)

**“Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths. She shall pursue her lovers but not overtake them, and she shall seek them but shall not find them ... And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers and forgot me, declares the LORD. “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.”
(Hosea 2:6–14 ESV)**

**“Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.””
(Ezekiel 37:12–14 ESV)**

**““And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”
(Deuteronomy 30:1–6 ESV)**

2. At the time of Israel’s final regathering, God promised to enter into a *new* covenant with them. Unlike the covenant He established with them through Moses, the Law would be written on their hearts and His Spirit would be given to them, empowering them to obey the Law *from the heart* (Deuteronomy 30:1-6) in order to fulfill the purpose for which God *elected* them – to administer the *blessing* of restoration and relationship to the nations of the earth.

**“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the LORD... Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”
(Jeremiah 31:27–33 ESV)**

**“And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.”
(Ezekiel 11:19–20 ESV)**

**“I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.”
(Ezekiel 36:24–28 ESV)**

3. This New Covenant is only ever said to be made with *the house of Israel and the house of Judah*. Gentiles have no legal participation in the New Covenant. This is clearly seen by the passages that indicate the oath of loyalty and the enactment of the covenant happen *after* Israel’s return from exile.

“Like all ANE Covenants, the New Covenant legally commences with the swearing of the oath. As a bilateral treaty, both of the named parties to the covenant (Yahweh God and Israel/Judah) mutually agree to the contract. In official covenant ceremony, the suzerain offers in pledge the terms of the covenant with its obligations,

blessings, and penalties. The vassal, in turn, responds to the suzerain’s pledge by swearing to those terms.”⁴

4. Just as at Sinai, Israel will, with repentance, agree to the terms of the New Covenant and both parties will ratify their agreement with blood. This is why Jesus says that His blood is the “blood of the covenant” (Matthew 26:28).
5. In many modern explanations of the New Covenant, it is said that the *spiritual* benefits have been inaugurated but the *natural* benefits for Israel are yet to come. This is a Platonic division that is foreign to Scripture. The benefits of the New Covenant are *not new benefits*. Instead of *partial and temporal* benefits offered through the covenant at Sinai, the New Covenant sets forth the same benefits but with *universal and eternal* scope.

a. Forgiveness of sin

i. Old Covenant

“Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.”

(Psalms 32:1–2 ESV)

“Then he shall offer the second for a burnt offering according to the rule. And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin that he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.”

(Leviticus 5:10 ESV)

ii. New Covenant

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.”

(Ezekiel 36:25 ESV)

““Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah ... For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.””

(Jeremiah 31:31, 34 ESV)

⁴ Beacham, Roy E., “The Church Has No Legal Relationship to or Participation in the New Covenant”, pg. 29-30

b. Gathered back from exile

i. Old Covenant

““Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.’””
(2 Chronicles 36:23 ESV)

ii. New Covenant

“And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.”
(Ezekiel 36:23–24 ESV)

“Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.”
(Jeremiah 32:37–40 ESV)

c. Spirit poured out

i. Old Covenant

““See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship,”
(Exodus 31:2–3 ESV)

“Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it.”

(Numbers 11:25 ESV)

“So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.”

(Numbers 27:18 ESV)

ii. New Covenant

““And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.”

(Joel 2:28–29 ESV)

“And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.””

(Ezekiel 39:29 ESV)

- iii. As we have already examined, the Spirit being given to a righteous remnant in Acts 2 is essentially the *first fruits* and *guarantee* of the New Covenant promise that all of Israel would be prophets, as Moses said “would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!” (Numbers 11:29). It was given without discrimination (sons, daughters, slave, free, etc.), to all those calling on the name of Jesus.

d. Law written on the heart

i. Old Covenant

“The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice. The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip. The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death.”

(Psalms 37:30–32 ESV)

**““Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings.”
(Isaiah 51:7 ESV)**

ii. New Covenant

**““Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah... I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”
(Jeremiah 31:31–33 ESV)**

e. The knowledge of God

i. Old Covenant

**“Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.”
(Exodus 33:11 ESV)**

ii. New Covenant

**““Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah ... And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.””
(Jeremiah 31:31–34 ESV)**

6. The New Testament witness of the New Covenant continues these themes without any sort of redefinition that includes Gentiles as a party to it.

“And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body,

which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”
(Luke 22:15–20 ESV)

“But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. For he finds fault with them when he says: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one [the old covenant] obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”
(Hebrews 8:6–13 ESV)

7. Just as Moses was the *mediator* of the covenant at Sinai, so Jesus is the mediator of the better covenant:

“while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.” So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD.”
(Exodus 19:3–8 ESV)

“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; ... For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance... so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.”
(Hebrews 9:11-28 NASB)

8. Because of who Jesus is and what He has done, Israel will one day return to the LORD their God and be saved, entering into the New Covenant ratified by the blood of Christ. But when will that happen, and how do the Gentiles play into the story?

What about the Gentiles?

1. While it is tremendously clear looking retrospectively that Gentiles play a part in the story of Israel, it came as a shock to the original followers of Jesus when Cornelius, a Gentile and a “God-fearer”, had received the Holy Spirit upon hearing and receiving the truth about Jesus (Acts 10). This creates a tremendous tension for the Jewish followers of Jesus. How and why did a non-Torah observant, uncircumcised Gentile receive the Holy Spirit?
2. *Cornelius was justified by faith alone.* It was because of this that the *Jerusalem Council* was held where a decision was made based on the writings of the prophets that God intended to justify the Gentiles as well, and that the gospel of faith Jesus should not be kept from them.

“When they [Paul and Barnabas] came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.”

The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the

test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. After they finished speaking, James replied, “Brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, “‘After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.’ Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God,”

(Acts 15:4–19 ESV)

3. It is important to recognize that Cornelius was not cleansed of his sins because he entered into the New Covenant. The New Covenant is not how humanity is forgiven of sin – the blood of Jesus is what cleanses us and frees us from sin. The hidden truth now revealed was that *both Jew and Gentile can be justified and declared righteous before God by faith in Jesus.*
4. Opponents like the Pharisees and the circumcision party would rise up and say to the Gentiles: “unless you are circumcised and start keeping the Torah, God will not raise you from the dead!” This was a contentious point for Jews who still believed circumcision and the Law was what justified them. God was *provoking them to anger and jealousy* by promising the covenant blessings to a non-Torah observant, uncircumcised, foolish people who merely repented of their sin and had faith in Jesus. This is exactly what God had said to the people through Moses:

““But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked; you grew fat, stout, and sleek; then he forsook God who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation. They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded. You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth.

“The LORD saw it and spurned them, because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters. And he said, ‘I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end will be, For they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness. They have made me jealous with what is no god; they have provoked me to anger with

their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are no people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.”
(Deuteronomy 32:15–21 ESV)

5. Paul makes it clear in Romans 9–11 that though a remnant of Israel had repented and put their faith in Jesus for salvation, most were *hardened* and a *partial blindness* was upon them so that the promise of salvation could come to the Gentiles. Israel would remain partially blinded until the time for Gentile harvest was ended. At that time, Israel would cry out for deliverance, Jesus would return, and the age to come would commence with the salvation of all of Israel and the end of their exile.

“I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.”
(Romans 11:1–7, 11–16, 25–28 ESV)

6. As Gentiles, our hope is in a final exile and regathering of Israel so that they can administer the *blessing* as servant-kings to the nations of the earth through the reign of Jesus in Jerusalem. By God’s mercy, through faith in Jesus alone, we have the promise of salvation from the wrath to come and participation in the restoration of all things – just as God had promised to Abraham.

“For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.”

And again it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.”

And again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.”

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

(Romans 15:8–13 ESV)



Fig. 6.9 – The Administration of Divine Glory in the Age to Come