

The Israel of God

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THE ISRAEL OF GOD

Gal 3:25-29

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many as were baptised into Christ, you put on Christ. There cannot be Jew or Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; 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.”

Being Abraham's Seed is the key to understanding the Israel and Church issue.

Jesus Christ declared to the Jews in John 8:56 that Abraham “saw His day and rejoiced”. And He continues to say: “before Abraham was I am”. So, in fact, Christ was before Abraham the Chaldean, Isaac, Jacob and the twelve tribes, later called Israel.

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw [it], and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8: 56-58 KJV.)

This gives us an understanding of Paul's revelation of the mystery of Christ and the Church, given to us in his letter to the Ephesians and in his second letter to

Timothy. Paul puts Christ and the Church even before Abraham and says that they existed before the foundations of the world.

“According as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:” (Ephesians 1: 4) NKJV

“Who hath saved us, and called [us] with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (2 Tim 1:9) NKJV

Paul highlights the fact that this revelation was hidden in Himself from before creation and is only now being revealed to His holy apostles and prophets.

“...how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery...” (hidden truths) (Ephesians 3:3)

This revelation is of great importance; for if we confuse this issue of Israel and the Church, we can end up disqualifying the Jews from being part of God's eternal plan, and the Church of being part of God's holy nation.

This holy nation is without prejudice; there is no middle wall of separation between Jew and gentile, male and female, rich and poor. This is the new creation, the Covenant and the one new man in Christ!

Answering the following relevant questions could help us to understand the mystery of Christ and His Church, the Bridegroom and the Bride, and how they relate to Israel.

1. Was Eve an afterthought or backup plan of God because she was only revealed later in time or was she part of the original plan, but hidden?

2. Was the appearance of Eve the replacement of Adam or the completion?

The same questions could apply to the Church and the nation of Israel.

Was the Church an afterthought of God because the nation of Israel came first, and only when they disappointed, did God decide to start the Church?

Or was the Church hidden in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from the beginning?

Was there an Israel hidden inside Israel from its conception?

Does the Church replace Israel as a nation, or fulfill God's eternal purpose to have a holy nation of kings and priests?

Is there a greater meaning to the name "Israel" given to a historical man called Jacob, than what we have been led to believe?

God's plan for man, from the beginning, was to fill the whole earth with a Holy Seed that would overcome and carry His image and likeness (Gen. 1: 26-27).

Isaiah the prophet writes that the whole earth is filled with His Glory. (Is. 6:1-2)

David writes:

“What is man (“enowsh”- mankind” not “ish” -male) that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visit him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all [things] under his feet: (Ps. 8:4-6 KJV)

Even before God gave Moses the Law, He declared His heart’s desire to him. He desired a royal nation where everyone would be a priest, filling the earth with His reputation and glory, because the whole world belongs to Him.

“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” (Ex.19: 5-6)

Peter (in the New Testament) quotes this passage of scripture in his second epistle:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” (1Pe 2: 9-10 NKJV)

So Peter writes and declares that the Church is this Royal priesthood and holy nation. This is how the Church operated in the beginning. The apostles interpreted the Old Testament to the Church.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Act 2: 42 KJV)

Remember they had no New Testament; they used the Old Testament to minister the purposes of God to the disciples and to reveal present day truth to them. They interpreted the shadows, types, metaphors and parables of the Old Covenant to them by the Spirit and showed their present day application and relevance.

This is what is meant by the expression "apostolic doctrine." Intellectuals cannot teach it in Bible schools. It is the fresh Manna from heaven as a Proceeding Word that man needs for daily living. Man cannot live from natural food alone.

Jesus said to the devil in His temptation:
"But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' " (Matt 4: 4 NKJV)

We need true apostles today or else we could miss out on apostolic doctrine.

These two scriptures, one in the Old and the other in the New Testament are of great significance. Peter the

Apostle, being a Jew himself, interprets apostolically the Word of God given to Moses under the Law by applying it to New Testament believers in Christ.

Notice that the word given to Moses is eternal but conditional.

“If you indeed ... then I will make you ...”(Ex 19:5).

Peter says to the Church:

“But you are a chosen generation a royal priesthood and a Holy nation.” (1Peter 2:9 NKJV)

There is no condition to this scripture in the New Testament except to have faith.

The question must be asked:

Did Peter or the apostles believe in replacing the Jew and natural Israel with the Church by interpreting the Old Testament scripture that was given exclusively to Israel then, but now applying it to the believing New Testament Church?

If this were so, it would make Peter the first one applying “replacement theology” as some coin this kind of thinking. But this could not be so, for the actions of Peter, as we shall see in the New Testament, are contrary to this belief.

Even the Apostle Paul proclaimed to the Philippians that he is an Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin and circumcised on the eighth day but now count it all worthless to be found in Christ.

What does John the Baptist mean by saying to the Pharisees who came to be baptised?

“Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves we have Abraham as father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.”

(Luke 3:8 NKJV)

So radical was the New Covenant that Peter, a Jew, had to receive a very radical vision, three times, before God could convince and use him to go into the house of Cornelius, a heathen, and share the Gospel with his family.

Then to complicate things further, while speaking to these Greeks in Cornelius’ house, the Holy Spirit fell on the uncircumcised heathen just like on the 120 Jews in the upper room! It was problematic because of the prophecy of Joel in the Old Testament that declared that the Holy Spirit’s outpouring was a sign that God was in the midst of Israel.

This same Peter declared on day of Pentecost that the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled when he declared to the eleven: “this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel”. But this complicated things for Peter for he knew that Joel spoke exclusively to the priests and the nation of Israel and to the House of God.

The Prophet Joel:

“And ye shall know that I [am] in the midst of Israel, and [that] I [am] the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed. And it shall come to pass afterward, [that] I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.” (Joel 2:27-29) NKJV

On the day of Pentecost this was fulfilled. Peter stood up with the eleven and boldly declared that the outpouring is the evidence that God was in the midst of Israel. They had no problem to interpret the outpouring as the prophetic word of Joel.

Although these people who were at the feast on the day of Pentecost were from different nations they were all circumcised and Law abiding people. They were all Jewish proselytes and therefore Israel.

But in the Book of Acts, chapter ten, God poured out His Spirit upon the uncircumcised heathen as well. According to Joel’s prophecy and Peter’s interpretation this meant God treated believing Jews and believing heathen as Israel. Peter went even further by baptising these uncircumcised believers of gentile origin.

Later Jewish believers came from Jerusalem and told Paul and Barnabas in Antioch that unless the heathen believers are circumcised and keep the law they could not be saved. After a heated debate the Church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to

Jerusalem to get clarity about this all important matter.

The apostles and elders in Jerusalem received them and heard Peter and Paul's report. The apostle James, the brother of Jesus, chaired that meeting.

At this first all Jewish Apostolic Council in Jerusalem in Acts 15, the apostolic council wanted to know the following:

Why did Paul not circumcise the heathen believers?
Why did Peter go to Cornelius' house
Why did he baptise them?

The question they faced was crucial for the Church that day as well as for us today. Does the salvation by the Messiah include the heathen and if so should they also become Jews by way of circumcision and keep the law?

It is important to understand their concern. Right through the Old Testament all the promises of God concerning salvation were always directed towards, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel, Canaan - the promised land, the Temple, David's throne - Zion, Jerusalem, etc.

The Messiah came to this nation Israel in the fullness of time. He was a Jew according to the flesh and also circumcised on the eighth day according to the Law. He walked and ministered in the promise land.

Many of the prophecies in the Old Covenant concerning the end of the age referred to the nation Israel. If not, how should we interpret God's Word in the New Testament concerning Israel?

If so, then these prophecies should be understood as being applicable only to the natural seed of Abraham, and the natural Jewish nation, and the Promise land beyond the Jordan. Then all believers would have to be circumcised and become part of this Israel and to lay claim the promises of God concerning Canaan, as an inheritance.

Then the latter temple with the greater glory, spoken by Haggai, would mean a rebuilt temple of brick and mortar in Jerusalem.

Remember the whole Church up to then was only made up of the Israelites, natural sons of Abraham, all circumcised and living in the promise land. What complicated the situation was that God was adding to His Church non-Jewish believers and He did it through grace by faith and not by the way of the Law and circumcision!

The questions they asked at this meeting were:

Can this happen?

Should these believers not also keep the Law and especially be circumcised to become part of Israel?

Isn't the natural Jewish nation the kingdom nation of God that would rule the world from natural mount Zion, in the fullness of time,

And shouldn't all nations come to her to be blessed, as the prophets said?

Many Christians are journeying to Palestine today because they feel that Palestine and Israel is where the next move of God will happen.

How do we interpret the following promise, and many like them in the Old Testament?

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.” Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good” (Ps 122: 6&9) NKJV

This important issue and many like this must be settled by the Church of our day. For if we do not discern our season we might be frustrated with outdated and inaccurate interpretations. This is what happened at that first apostolic meeting in Jerusalem. They had to find the heart of God in the matter of the Jews and the gentiles for the New Covenant age.

They knew the Old Testament administration of Israel and nations but they now need answers to certain question:

Who is the Israel of God?

Is there another Zion and Jerusalem?

Who is the House of David?

What promise and city was Abraham looking for in the Old Testament?

Why did he even after he saw Jerusalem remain in his tent in the promise land and dwell there like a stranger?

“By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as [in] a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker [is] God.” (Heb 11: 9,10 NKJV)

Keep in mind that Abraham saw Jerusalem the city of Melchizedek in Genesis chapter fourteen. Why would Abraham the father of faith treat the Promise land and Jerusalem like foreign entities? Was staying in his tent with Isaac and Jacob, a sign that he knew there was something more than a natural promise? It looks like Abraham, the father of faith, knew that there was a greater land, city and nation and he kept on moving and searching.

I know it sounds like we keep on asking difficult questions, questions that provoke us to think and ask the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we search out the Scriptures. We have to keep on asking ourselves honest questions in order to search out the truth in this all important matter.

If Paul states that not all of Israel is part of Israel then we need to understand that he is saying there are two nations? We need to establish the place and role of the Israel that are truly Israel and the place of the Israel that are not Israel indeed. Paul by this statement declares there are two Israels, one in the flesh and the other of the Spirit. Is the New Covenant the renewal of the Old or is it indeed a New Covenant?

Does salvation by grace replace the Law and all the prophetic promises to the natural nation, or are faith and grace added to it? Are there now two ways of salvation; one by the Law and the Prophets and circumcision for the Jewish believers, and the other, through grace by faith for the gentile nations? Could the heathen believers now read and claim the Old Testament promises?

At the meeting in Jerusalem to discuss this issue were apostles and elders but Acts 15:5 also states:

But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command [them] to keep the Law of Moses."

This was the problem; these believing Pharisees insisted that the Law of Moses should be kept and that the heathen believers be circumcised. They clearly believed that to be saved you also had to become part of the natural nation, Israel.

They substantiated their argument from the way God added to His people under the Old Testament. Moses had to circumcise his two sons born from Jethro's daughter. Jethro was the Median priest. And so did Joseph circumcise his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, from Asenath. She was the daughter of Poti-Pherah the priest of On. Even Judah married Shua, a Canaanite, who gave him three sons. Later he married the Canaanite woman, Tamar, from whom Perez and Zerah were born (Gen. 38).

There was even an incident where Jacob suggested that the whole household of Hamor, the Hivite (a Canaanite) be circumcised and added to the nation of Israel. (Gen. 34:15).

This is how, throughout the Old Testament history, salvation came to the nations. If they wanted to be included in the blessings of God they had to be circumcised and joined to the natural nation, Israel.

The argument of the believing Pharisees, in the Jerusalem meeting, affirms the confusion in the Church concerning the Law and grace amongst some influential leaders.

They believed that one has to believe in Jesus the Christ but also to become a Jew by circumcision and keep the Old Testament requirements of the natural Israel.

Isn't this the same issue that persists in the Church today adding the Law to grace? People are now even saying they are pursuing their Jewish roots. I often wondered why Jesus never referred to Himself as a Jew, but the Son of man.

And Paul warned the Christian believers in Corinth:

“Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know [Him thus] no longer.” (2Co 5:16 NKJV)

I believe if we do not get clarity on what God already sorted out that day in Jerusalem, we might find the

whole prophetic movement being led into error by a legalistic spirit. The Prophets might be sincere and zealous for God but still in danger of misleading the Church. We may place burdens on God's people that even the Jewish people could not bear.

This issue of who the Israel of God is, is critical in understanding eschatology (things concerning the end). I have heard many people say Israel is the hand on God's end time clock and by watching Israel we might understand the signs of the times. I believe it is absolutely true but:

The question I ask: Which Israel, the natural or the spiritual?

If we focus on the wrong nation city and temple we might be in danger of misinterpreting what's happening and focus on the flesh and not on the spirit.

Don't be overly surprised when reputable prophets struggle to understand this issue and confuses the natural and the spiritual in this all important matter. I have even noticed how prophets, who are accurate in spiritual matters, are confused about eschatology. Because they cannot identify Israel.

One good example of the severity of this issue happened in the history of Israel at 70AD. The armies of the Romans was approaching Jerusalem. There were two prophetic voices going out to the people in Jerusalem. Remember that most of the Church were Jews living in Jerusalem.

One voice reminded the people that God will never destroy the City and the Temple. They used the Old Testament promises of the Law and the Prophets to convince the people that they should just pray for the peace, protection and prosperity of Jerusalem and then they will have peace and they will be protected and be prosperous.

Many Israelites believed these prophets because they use the Old Testament scriptures to convince them. Sadly more than a million who obeyed these prophets died in the city in the most brutal and cruel way. But there was one group of Israelites that did not listen to these prophets of the day. They fled to the mountains when they saw Jerusalem surrendered by armies and heard of wars and rumors of wars. Not one of these Israelites died.

My question to God was: Was the Psalmist lying when he said that we should pray for the peace of Jerusalem for in its peace and prosperity we will prosper?

Then God spoke to me and said to me that His Word is ever true and cannot change but its application might change. He said to me that nothing happened to His city and His temple during 70AD.

His City obeyed His voice and His Church, Nation, City and Temple departed out from Jerusalem and had peace and protection just like the Psalmist recorded for us.

We have a another good example of this matter in the Old Testament.

Samuel who judged Israel for 40 years was confused in the matter of David. He, whose words never fell on the ground unfulfilled, now could not find God's king

amongst the sons of Jesse. Samuel the Seer could not see the shifting from Saul to David, from the natural to the spiritual and from the outer stature to the unseen heart.

Could it be that being under the inaccurate rule of King Saul for so long it even contaminated the prophet? Could it be that Saul's spirit of fear influenced him?

I never thought I would ever read the following words concerning Samuel, indicating the presence of fear in his heart:

“And Samuel said how can I go? If Saul hears it he will kill me.” (1 Sam 16: 2)

Samuel told God that he could not obey His word, for if Saul heard about it he would kill him. And God told Samuel to take an offering and say to the elders in Bethlehem that he was coming to sacrifice to the Lord.

What about this present season? Could it be that “old prophets” of a previous season are contaminating our understanding of eschatology and present day truth by their fear of the future?

I am amazed to see how accurate prophets of the Charismatic season and even this Apostolic season are contaminated by fear. They are expecting a world catastrophe and so allow fear to grip their hearts, and as a result they look for a way to escape.

Of course, the world will grow darker but we are not of the world that we should fear, for in Isaiah 60 it is declared that on us the glory of the Lord will shine.

Isaiah the prophet:

“Arise shine for your light has come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold darkness shall cover the earth and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will rise over you.” (Is 60:1-2 NKJV)

David says:

“A thousand my fall on your at your side and ten thousand at your right hand but it shall not come near you only with your eyes shall you look and see the reward of the wicked.” (Ps 91: 7-8 NKJV)

Malachi the prophet puts it this way:

"For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch." (Mal 4:1) NKJV

“But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.” (Mal 4:2) NKJV

Paul says:

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness."

(1 Thess 5:1-3 NKJV)

Thank God, there is a Davidic company that daily eats fresh manna and showbread from the presence of the Lord; a people who dwell beyond the veil. They are moved by the Spirit and the Word of God and not by the world media and the fear of man. They are like the servant of the Lord spoken of in Isaiah chapter eleven.

"His delight [is] in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;"

(Is 11:3 NKJV)

Because of the heated dispute in the meeting at Jerusalem, the apostles and the elders had another meeting. They did not allow the Pharisees there.

This meeting is the one often referred to as The First Apostolic Council.

"Then the apostles and elders came together to consider the matter ... there had been much dispute"

(Acts 15:6-7).

So even amongst the apostles and elders there was disagreement. I believe the Pharisees and their own Jewish culture had an influence on them.

Peter got up and testified what God did amongst the heathen, how they believed and how God baptized them with the Holy Spirit; just like them. He concluded with the following statement:

"So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as [He did] to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."
(Acts 15: 9-11) NKJV

Peter's testimony is very important, for he was the one who had great problems at first in understanding the "Jewish-Heathen" situation. He was the first one who crossed the cultural barrier to non-Jews. His statements to the Apostolic counsel could be summarized as follow:

a) God knows the hearts:

Here Peter states that salvation is a matter of the heart. God acknowledges them by giving them the Holy Spirit.

Remember, Joel the prophet said that the Holy Spirit is given as a sign that God is in the midst of his people Israel and shows who His sons and daughters

are by pouring out His Spirit on them. This is exactly what God told Samuel, hundreds of years ago, when He sent him to the house of Jesse.

“Do not look at the outward appearance for God sees the heart”. (1Sam16: 7)

b) God made no distinction between Jew and heathen: In the New Covenant, God does not see Jew or Greek but one new man. We can rightfully ask: Is it the circumcision and the Law, or the heart that qualifies us in the sight of God to be called the Israel of God?

“Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples?”

Peter calls these heathen believers, disciples. He cautioned the meeting not to test God by questioning the way He operates and who He calls Israel.

‘But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.’

c) He declares that there isn't two separate ways of salvation, one for the Jews and another for the heathen. By grace through faith both Jews and heathen believers are saved.

I believe it is very important for us today to understand that what Peter said, agrees with what the apostle Paul said in all his writings. Both Jews and non-Jews need to be saved. Without Christ it doesn't matter if you're a Jew or not. You are a sinner in need of salvation.

The operational system of the Old Covenant:

Now the Old Testament operated differently. God treated the whole nation of Israel as different from the other nations. We know they were sinners, unbelieving people, rebellious against the Word of God. Yet God delivered them from the slavery of Egypt. This salvation did not change their hearts. They were now saved sinners saved from Egypt but still slaves of sin!

Listen to how Paul describes this nation Israel that was saved from Egypt:

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for [their bodies] were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as [were] some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”

(1Co 10:1-11 NKJV)

Paul continues by saying:

"We [who are] Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh is justified.

(Gal 2:15&16 NKJV)

This brings us to the following question:

Is there a difference between the natural Israel of the Old Testament and the natural Israel of the New Testament?

It's an important question because we saw how this sinful nation called on the promises of God and were saved from their enemies and blessed.

Can the natural, unbelieving Israel, in this present time still claim the Old Testament promises given to their fathers? Or are these promises of God only yes in Christ? Does the Old Testament still operate the same way after the Cross and inauguration of the New Testament?

The question must be asked:

Did the Cross of Christ only affect the gentile nations or the natural Jewish nation as well?

It might help to consider the following questions as well:

To whom was the Son of God, the Messiah, sent?

Was His coming for the nations or to the natural Israel or both?

The NT is full of statements that He first came primarily to the natural Israel.

"He came to His own..."

(John 1:11 NKJV)

Jesus himself said:

"But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

(Matt 15:24 NKJV)

His apostolic mandate to the twelve were:

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Acts 1:8 NKJV

First the natural and then the spiritual:

This principle is seen throughout the whole Bible. God always, as Paul rightly wrote, started with the natural first and then the spiritual:

"It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." the last Adam [became] a life-giving spirit.

However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. (1Co15:44-46 NKJV)

At the time of the apostolic meeting in Jerusalem, Jerusalem and the Jewish temple were still standing and the Levitical order with its High priest was still in operation. This meant that the daily sacrifices, and all the feasts were still in full operation. All though it was invalid, outdated and inaccurate, AND ABOUT TO BE REVOKED, yet it was still functioning.

“In that He says, “A new [covenant],” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”

(Heb. 8: 13 NKJV)

It was only about thirty years after this meeting that the City was destroyed, the High priest and priests killed, and the Temple burned down to the ground just like Jesus told them in Matthew, twenty four:

“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.”

(Matt 24:34 NKJV)

Surely without Jerusalem, the Temple, a High Priest, the Levitical priesthood, and daily sacrifices, the Law could not be kept. Who would kill the animals, sprinkle the blood and make atonement to cover the sins of the unbelieving and rebellious, natural Jews?

Would God after Calvary, ever again return to the shadows of Christ, and from Christ, the reality, the

substance, the Spirit, migrate back to shadows, buildings, blood of animals, and the flesh?

“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” (Col 2:16-17 NKJV)

“So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality.” (Col 2:16-17 New Living Translation)

“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, [and] not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.” (Heb 10:1 KJV)

It is the apostle James, after listening to Peter, who confirmed what was said by quoting and interpreting the prophetic word of Amos the prophet. He quotes chapter 9 where God announces an amazing prophetic word through Amos. God addressed the whole issue of Jacob and Israel and the fullness of time.

He asks a question to Israel in Amos 9:7:

"[Are] you not like the people of Ethiopia to Me, O children of Israel?" says the LORD. "Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, The Philistines from Caphtor, And the Syrians from Kir?"

We know that Abraham was a Chaldean from Ur in Babylonia. Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh were born of an Egyptian mother, Asenath, a priest's daughter. There was also Tamar and Rehab, the harlot. Both were Canaanites.

What about Ruth the Moabite, the grand mother of king David?

These and others were included from the nations into the lineage of Israel and the Messiah. The basis of their inclusion was faith but their children had to be circumcised and expected to keep the Law.

So we see that even the natural Israel at first was called from different nations.

In fact Abraham, as we have mentioned, was not a Jew and not circumcised when God called and declared him righteous. Abraham was a man of faith who lived about 430 years before the Law of Moses was given.

The Law was added hundreds of years after the promises God gave Abraham and his Seed. It was therefore the Law of Moses, after it has fulfilled its purpose, would come to its expiration. Paul says it was added because of the transgressions, until the Seed would come (Gal 4:19).

Paul continues by saying that the Law did not annihilate or make void the promises and covenant God made and confirmed to Abraham before, in

Christ. The Law did not replace these promises. Christ the Seed is the expiry date on the Law of Moses.

All the promises to Abraham were made to a believing, yet uncircumcised Chaldean man (Rom 4:10).

So before there was a natural nation called Israel, there was an uncircumcised father of faith. God made all the promises to Abraham and his Seed.

The question God is asking Israel through the Prophet Amos was the following:

What makes you so special?

Just as I brought you from Egypt I also brought the other nations from other locations.

Somewhere in the Old Testament God told Israel that He is taking them to the land of the Canaanites not because Israel is more righteous than them but because of the promises made to Abraham and his Seed.

The Seed of Abraham:

We are forced to return to the question: Who is the Seed of Abraham?

Paul declared that the Seed of Abraham to whom all the promises were made was singular not plural.

Paul goes on to say that this singular Seed is Christ.

‘Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.’ (Gal 3:16 NKJV)

“But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.” (Gal 3:25 NKJV)

Christ, is the key to understand the nation of God and God’s kingdom.

I can still remember 1974 in Theological College, a lecturer told us: “Your preaching must be Christ-centered.” Back then, I did not fully understand what he meant. There are so many themes in the Old and New Testament and to only preach Christ would be difficult.

But now 37 years later and having preached thousands of messages I think I am starting to understand what it means.

Christ is the message and the theme of God’s Word. In fact, Christ is the Word.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”. (John 1:1,14 NKJV)

Jesus in His post-resurrection appearance, when they could not believe that it was He, showed Himself to

His disciples from the Law and the Prophets. He revealed Christ to them from the Old Testament.

“And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

Christ, the Seed, is the Key to understand the Israel of God.

God always had one nation and one people. In the Old Covenant it was a natural people, circumcised and coming from one man's loins, Abraham. They lived in a common geographical place promised to them. Some pleased God but most did not. Their main purpose was to bring the promised Seed into the earth that would save humanity from sin and death and reconcile man back to God and His original purpose. This Seed was promised to Eve, Abraham and David. This Seed would conquer the evil one by crushing his head. He would bring blessings to all the nations and sit on the throne of David and rule the nations in justice and truth. Yes, He would establish the Kingdom of God forever. The Seed would become a firstborn of a company of people and a holy nation that would fill the earth with His image, likeness and glory. In fact He wants a firstborn company.

“Of the increase of [His] government and peace [There will be] no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Is. 9: 7 NKJV)

One new Creation, one new man!

The New Covenant through Christ has broken down the middle wall of separation between Jews and gentiles.

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,” (Eph 2: 14 KJV)

God, always and still, has only one holy nation but the composition and definition of who they are and their geography has drastically changed. Now they are a people who please Him and share His nature and walk by faith and not by sight. They are no longer a small nation located in a small geographical area in the Middle East. This nation is a governmental people that covers the entire earth; and the earth and the nations are promised to them. They are rulers with God and man. They are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ Jesus.

Israel indeed:

This nation fulfills the description Jesus gave to one Israeli man, Nathaniel:

“Behold an Israelite indeed...” (John 1:47 NKJV)

This compliment of Jesus to one Israelite was also an indictment against the rest who were circumcised and boasted that they were called Israel; they carried the name, but not the lifestyle and nature. It seems that Jesus wanted those who listened to Him to

understand that He knew the fake from the real or genuine.

Israel, to Him, has to do with the heart!

The "Israel indeed" is what Paul calls "the Israel of God". Paul made a very radical statement concerning Israel when he wrote to the Church in Rome:

"For they [are] not all Israel, which are of Israel." (Rom 9:6 NKJV)

The question could be asked:

What Israel is Paul talking about? Aren't all Israel, Israel? How can some be Israel and yet not be part of Israel? If you are of the lineage of Abraham and circumcised then surely you qualify to be a Jew and be of Israel?

Could there be another dimension and a higher application of the circumcision and the name Israel than that of the natural and the flesh?

The Bible talks about a circumcision of the heart, a nation where all are circumcised, male and female, Jew and Greek, slave and free. Paul calls it the cutting away of the sinful flesh. This New Testament circumcision shifts from the shadow (flesh) to the heart, and from the natural to the spiritual.

One day at a well Jesus spoke to a Samaritan woman who said that they worship at this mountain but the Jews worship at Jerusalem.

"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you [Jews] say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. "God [is] Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.

(John 4: 20-23 NKJV)

If the circumcision in the New Testament moves from the flesh to the heart, then surely God's people, in Christ, also move from the flesh to the heart (spirit).

What about Jerusalem, the Temple and the inheritance?

For the New Covenant tells us clearly that they were all shadows of a greater reality in the Spirit. Paul to whom the mystery of Christ was revealed gives us much insight into this matter through many scriptures.

Here are but a few:

"But he [is] a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision [is that] of the heart, in the spirit, [and] not in the letter; whose praise [is] not of men, but of God." (Rom 2: 29 KJV)

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.” (Gal 6:15 NKJV)

“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” (Phil 3: 3 NKJV)

*“In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.
(Col 2:11 KJV)*

“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond [nor] free: but Christ [is] all, and in all.” (Col3: 11 KJV)

*“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy [be] upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”
(Gal 5 16-17 NKJV)*

The conjunction “and” is the Greek word “kai”. It is translated mostly “and” in the English. But “kai” also means “even” and “indeed” (Strong’s # 2532)

“May God's peace and mercy be upon all who live by this principle; they are the new people of God.” (NTL)

Paul is trying to tell us that in Christ it's not important whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised but what's imperative is that you are a new creation. Upon this new creation

rests the blessings of God for they are indeed the Israel of God.

This New Creation in Christ is the Israel of God!

This truth isn't new; it was always proclaimed by the Prophets throughout the ages but is now being revealed. God told Moses that the earth belongs to Him (Ex 19:6). David in his Messianic psalm said that the ends of the earth and the nations belong to Christ. (Ps 2: 8-9; 25:1)

The Two cities:

This new creation, Jew and gentile, finds their identity in Christ the Messiah. No more based on nationality, gender or status.

Paul talks about the natural Jerusalem that existed in his day and the Jerusalem above. He says the natural Jerusalem is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free and is the Mother of us all.

“For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—”(Gal 4:27 NKJV).

We need to carefully read what Paul wrote?

He declares that Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia. (Now we know that Sinai is where the natural Israel received the Law of Moses).

He further declares that Hagar corresponds with the natural Jerusalem and are in bondage like Hagar and Ishmael.

Only Jerusalem above is free.

Paul implies that there are two Jerusalems, one from below and one from above. Two nations occupy both of these cities. The Israel from below corresponds with the flesh and represents servants and slaves. Paul says it corresponds with Abraham's concubine, Hagar, who gave him a seed, Ishmael, but not through the promise. The Israel from above are the true sons of God and please Him through their faith and obedience. They are sons of freedom, faith and promise and corresponds with Isaac.

But we need to read carefully again what Paul wrote to the Church in Galatia because many have missed this very important explanation about the mystery of Christ, the Church and the natural Israel.

“For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a free-woman. But he [who was] of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the free-woman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar.

Paul says Hagar stands for the Old Testament and Law.

“...for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children--but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.”

For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, [You] who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband." Now we, brethren, as Isaac [was], are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him [who was born] according to the Spirit, even so [it is] now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman." So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free. (Gal 4:22-31)

Paul wrote to the Greek believers in Galatia and told them they are like Isaac, children of the promise because they are born by the Spirit like Isaac. He told them they are children of the heavenly Jerusalem.

To them, as gentiles it was understandable because none of them ever claimed to be part of Jerusalem and Israel, anyhow.

But what's amazing is the way Paul, an Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin, to whom the natural Jerusalem belongs, includes himself in his writing.

"... but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all...."

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac [was], are children of promise.

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

Paul is stating that he, a Jew, and the Greek believers of Galatia belong to the heavenly Jerusalem (not the

one below) and also belong to the heavenly Israel, the Israel of the Spirit. He says Jerusalem above is the mother of those who are born by the spirit like Isaac.

Could it be, that we have been seeking the blessing and peace of the wrong City and nation?

Let's seriously and honestly answer the question:

Who are the seed of Abraham to whom all the promises are made? Keep in mind (Gal 3:16) that the Seed is Christ.

Remember what God said about Abraham and his Seed.

"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen. 12: 2-3 NKJV)

The Bible is clear to whom these promises belong:

to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ." (Gal 3: 16 NKJV)

Discerning the Israel of God:

So praying for and blessing and seeking the prosperity of the Seed of Abraham is seeking the prosperity of the Jerusalem above. I believe that's what David had in mind when he wrote Psalms 122:6 KJV.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

Now we know that before the Cross there was only one city. But after the Cross of Christ the eternal city, Jerusalem, whose peace we should seek is from above.

If we bless Abraham and his Seed, God says He will bless us, but whosoever curses the Seed will be cursed (Gen.12:2-5). Our own peace and prosperity as individuals and nations strongly depend on how we treat God's City and nation.

We who are part of, the Western World, could be in danger of missing God's blessing and peace if we keep on being confusing who the Seed of Abraham is and looking and searching for the City below and not above and by substituting the spiritual with the natural.

If we keep on blessing the fleshly and ignoring the spiritual there are serious consequences. How we treat His nation is how we treat Him! His nation is the apple of His eye. He has appointed his nation as a kingdom people who has the key to bless the nations of the world. Now do not get me wrong, Abraham son according to the flesh was blessed by God. God made it 12 tribes but they were always in opposition to Isaac the one of the promise and Spirit. It was Isaac though who was the heir and received all the promises of Abraham. I know many people look at the natural nation and say surely they are blessed by God in all

ways. Financially they control all the major financial systems of the world. In the field of science they lead almost in all facets. All this are true but I believe that when the true nation of God comes to maturity we will see and experience a glory this world has never seen in all facets of human life. Creation is waiting for the sons of God to grow up and show the glory of their Father and Creator of all things. They carry the answer to all the world major crisis.

I am not suggesting that we as the so called Western world, should treat any nation improperly or be biased towards any nation. We should not refuse to help any nation, oppressed or in need.

I am using the term Western world for those who have democratic governments and are viewed by the rest of the world as Christian-orientated nations. We, in the West, should actually know who the real Israel and Jerusalem is.

It is a problem if the so-called West is confused about whom to bless. We might be in danger of blessing, seeking the peace and protecting the wrong seed. This could mean we are persecuting Christ and fighting against God Himself but thinking we are doing Him a favor.

There are thousands of people in the Middle East, of Palestinian and Arabian descent, who believe in Christ. They have been born-again, baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit. The question is whose seed are they? According to the Word of God they are Abraham's seed Isaac and not Ismael. How could we

defend any one who rejects the Christ, the SEED, and violate the basic human rights of others?

I believe after Calvary, the Israel of God cannot be defined by former designated geographical, cultural and national boundaries.

The New Covenant is for the Israel of God:

The Bible is clear on this matter. The New Covenant is for a people called the House of Israel:

*“For if that first [covenant] had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...
"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.”*

(Heb 8: 7,8,10 NKJV)

The writer of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah the Prophet (See Jer. 31:31)

God Calls the people of the New Covenant, the House of Israel and Judah!

I believe this is what Paul means when he talks about the Israel of God. He is saying that those who have entered the New Covenant, Jew or gentile are the house of Israel. The New Covenant is written in the

hearts and minds of people, and it separates the real Israel from the natural Israel.

These first Jewish apostles, elders and leaders at the apostolic meeting in Jerusalem knew the word of Jeremiah the prophet:

“Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.... But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel;”

(Jer 31: 31& 33).

Therefore we can understand their concern in that first apostolic council. They knew Joel the prophet said that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a sign that God is in the midst of His people Israel, and now Jeremiah also confirms this by saying that the New Covenant is with the House of Israel.

By asking the gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the Law of Moses was the natural way of responding to the gentiles now being baptized in the Holy Spirit and entering into the New Covenant. If God treated the gentiles as the House of Israel then surely they must join the natural nation Israel!

God showed them by His Spirit that this House of Israel of the New Covenant is a new creation. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free but a new man in Christ.

This nation, as John saw in Revelation, is from every tribe, tongue and nation.

“And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation”,
(Rev 5:9)

Judah first:

In the Book of Revelation, the twelve tribes of Israel are mentioned. In each of these 12 tribes are 12 thousand that are part of those that follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Rev 7: 12).

This is not a return to the natural Israel at the end of time as many have written. No, the order of these tribes are not like that of the Old Testament. In this Revelation of the 144,000 the Tribe of David, the seed of Christ, is put first. This indicates to us a higher order of Israel. They are not arranged by natural birth order but by the order of Christ, the First Born.

The number twelve is the number of government. This indicates Kingdom authority. Consider the significance of the number twelve in relation to this ruling principle:

- 12 hours rule the day.
- 12 hours rule the night.
- 12 months rule the year.
- 12 tribes rule the Old Testament.
- 12 apostles rule the New Testament
- 12 Foundations in the New Jerusalem
- 12 Gates in the New Jerusalem.
- 24 elders around the Throne, 12+12

24 divisions of rulers in Solomon's kingdom.

The number twelve is the principle of government. So the Israel of God is a governmental nation in its fullness, 12 times 12. This does not mean a literal 144,000 Jews. No, this symbolises God's holy nation in all its fullness.

Being virgins that did not defile themselves with women does not mean they are males who never had sex with women. These 144,000 have not contaminated themselves with religious spirits and sin. Women are often used in the Old Testament as a metaphor for religious spirits, deception and idolatry - like Jezebel and Athaliah who distracted Israel into idol worship.

Paul tells the Corinthian believers that he presented them to Christ as a virgin.

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present [you as] a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Co 11:2) NKJV

The identification of this nation is by the Blood of the Lamb and the Spirit of God, and it doesn't matter if were Greek or Jew, male or female, live in Hong Kong, Nigeria, Libya, Jerusalem, Palestine or anywhere in the world!

We might be sincere and zealous about God and His nation and intend to do well but still be wrong. Remember a man by the name of Saul in the New Testament who had great zeal for God and wanted to help God rid Jerusalem of the people of the Way. He

went as far as to get letters from those who were custodians of the Law to persecute these backsliding Jews whom he thought had abandoned God. But in chapter nine of the Book of Acts he meets up with the Lord Himself, who asked him a serious question.

“Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It [is] hard for you to kick against the goads.” (Acts 9:1-5)

Paul, in his zeal for God was confused who to defend and who to persecute. He had no revelation and discernment who to advance and to bless but he found out pretty soon.

Could it be that the Lord has set up a Damascus road experience for the West, if we think we are the representatives of God and are doing Him a favor to advance and protect those who are of the flesh and in the mean time oppress the spiritual which is the Seed of Abraham?

Isn't He is trying to tell us, that we should be careful who we want to advance and whom we prosecute?

Will we discover like Paul that it is hard to kick against the goads?

These inaccurate behaviors have serious consequences. We cannot go on as we are, and think we are doing God a favour, or that we will not suffer the consequence!

Many nations have been waging wrong wars, and have protected ungodly systems in the name of religion and God.

Hitler is one of them. In his ungodly madness, started to eliminate Jews in the name of religion. And the Church and nations backed him. What a shame that a nation where God started the reformation did little as a prophetic voice to save the innocent Jews. This is an injustice that shouts to heaven, and all this in the name of religion!

How long will God in His great mercy tolerate the oppression of whole nations because of the confusion in the Church? This error, should not only be put before the door of the Governments of the Western World but must be put before the Church and her prophets who do little to help their governments understand who God's Israel is, and who should be protected and blessed. Christian nations should know how to treat all nations with dignity, justice and respect.

Not only do we neglect our watchman role, but we also help to formulate inaccurate and anti-Christ policies.

I am a Christian living in South Africa. I grew up under the apartheid system. I am of the opinion that it was the Church in general in our nation that justified the apartheid system in the name of religion. Most of the people in the government then were confessing Christians belonging to the Reformed family of Churches.

I believe that the Church is to be blamed for what happened in South Africa. All the gross injustices happened in the name of God and religion. The sad thing was that we used the Old Testament to justify racial discrimination.

I grew up in a community that loved the Lord. Most citizens of our town went to church on Sunday mornings. We had a colored man from Cape Town who came often to sing in our church. But he could only come in to render his item and then had to leave the church for he was not allowed to fellowship with the white Christians because of racial classification. It was not the pastor's decision, for he truly loved all nations. The church eldership made the decision.

Thank God that we came to our senses. It took pressure from the Western World, through all kinds of political and financial boycotts. Finally our president, Mr. De Klerk, under much pressure, made the right decision to un-ban the ANC political party and start the transition towards a true democratic South Africa. He and his cabinet decided to free Mr. Mandela and transition our nation to democracy. I cannot thank God enough for Mr De Klerk and Mr Mandela and

their contribution towards a peaceful transition from the shackles of apartheid.

"The Kairos South Africa" Document:

There was one document called "The Kairos South Africa" that was written by some sober Christians in our nation. They were pleading with Christians all over the earth to stand with them and put pressure on the South African government to do away with the evil apartheid system and treat all racial groups equally. In this document they argued that most Christians in our nation are non-white and are treated like unbelievers and heathen. They asked Christians and governments all over the world to put pressure on the National Party through protests and boycotts to reconsider its apartheid policy.

There were many contributing factors that caused our nation to transition but I believe that this document played a significant role in forcing justice to be served on the government of the day.

Although it might have acted behind the scenes, and invisible like yeast, it played a great role in dismantling this evil system. The only regret is that the Church, as a whole and in general, did not take the leading role in this fight for equality and non racism.

I believe what happened in South Africa was the direct result of an inaccurate understanding of the Old Testament and what happened at the Cross. The National Party was made up of 90% white dedicated

Christians, yet sadly for over 50 years they sanctioned the policy of apartheid.

Fear ruled the days during our transition.

There were two groups of Christians that emerged during those cloudy days in our history. One group told us of the bloodshed and suggested we fight or flee. Prophets came from the West and prophesied how the blood would flow into the streets of our cities. Then there was the other group that prayed and told us this was God's plan and He would protect this nation during the whole process of transition.

The West with its history of racial prejudice towards the blacks for centuries did not help our cause.

A casual reader of the Old Testament could easily conclude that God was prejudiced concerning nationality, race and gender.

But after Calvary no one could ever again say: "God loves all of mankind, especially the men." It would be unthinkable of anyone to say: "God loves all of mankind especially the free ones." What about: God loves all the nations especially the Jews?

The New Covenant through the Blood of Christ knows no prejudice.

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye [be]

Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal 3:27-29 KJV)

Paul calls this, the new man in Christ and the new creation. He is very clear on this matter.

Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, [even] the law of commandments [contained] in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, [so] making peace;
(Eph 2:15 NKJV)

“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”
(Eph 4:24 NKJV)

“And have put on the new [man], which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:”
(Col 3:10 NKJV)

“Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
(2Co 5:17 NKJV)

The apostle Peter, like all the Jerusalem believers, at first had a problem in understanding this matter. Paul challenged Peter openly on his behaviour when he noticed Peter's prejudice towards the heathen believers in Christ. Peter almost erroneously started the first Messianic Jewish movement by separating Jewish believers from heathen believers to form a kind of elitist Christian community.

This action was clearly against the will of God. There cannot be a Messianic or “Christian Jew” separated from the Church. We know there are many Jewish Christians in the Church but no Christian Jews. There is only one holy nation; all saved by grace through faith. Jews and Greeks are all part of God’s peculiar people and royal priesthood.

It is inaccurate to promote and talk about Messianic Jews as though they are special Jews that must be kept separate from the “heathen Church.” What then were the first 120 Jews in the upper room, Messianic Jews, disciples, or Jewish Christians?

It is unbiblical to say the Church is from the nations and forms the Bride of Christ but there is another kingdom plan with the Jews.

We know for sure, just like Paul, that God hasn’t rejected the natural nation of Israel (Rom 11). We know that they will one day come out of their spiritual slumber and blindness and accept Jesus Christ through the grace of God and by faith just like the rest of the sinners in the world. But until then they are sinners, and like the heathen, in need of the Gospel of Christ and His salvation. Not rejected, but in need of salvation like all the nations of the world!

The Olive Tree:

One must understand that the Olive Tree is Christ. He is the Root of David that carries and gives the Olive Tree its anointed nature. Through unbelief, the natural branches, (the unbelieving natural Israel) were

cut off and through faith the wild branches (believing Gentiles) were engrafted into Christ.

Paul tells us clearly that God can connect whoever believes -Jew or Gentile - and disconnect from the Olive Tree whoever does not believe in Christ. It is the connection with the Root that makes one part of the Olive Tree.

Peter said to the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem that Jew and Gentile are saved by the same grace through faith.

But there are erroneous teachings that the Jews will only believe in the Messiah when Jesus returns and they see Him. The Bible states emphatically that faith does not come by seeing but by hearing. Yes, faith only comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

“But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. So then faith [comes] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Rom10: 12-17 NKJV)

This view is dangerous for God loves them now not at the end. He wants to reveal Himself to them now, for now is the day of salvation. Lets not postpone the love and purpose of God for all the nation.

Jesus and Paul and the entire New Testament tell us of only one way that salvation would come to all mankind. It comes by faith. Jesus also told the Jews what the requirements were for seeing Him again.

Jesus said:

“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until [the time] come when ye shall say, Blessed [is] he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Luk 13:35)

This means that to the Jews and gentiles, salvation would not come by sight but by faith. They will have to believe those that come in His Name; those who have been sent to preach the gospel of Christ. If they don't, they will not see Him again.

It is not politically or biblically correct to talk about a Christian-Black, a Christian-White, or a Christian-female or male.

Christ means “Messiah”, the Anointed one. Christ is the issue not our nationality, gender, or status!

All the promises of God, Old and New Testament, were always made to the Seed of Abraham. This Seed is not male or female but Spirit. It transcends geography, gender, nationality and class.

It was the apostle Paul who confronted Peter on this issue during his ministry.

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before

that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them, which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.” (Gal 2: 11-12)

Paul declared that the mystery of Christ was the Seed of Abraham and how it pertained to the Church of Christ.

Children of Abraham are those who believe.

“Know ye therefore that they, which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” (Gal 3:7)

Paul makes a very important statement when he says there are two kinds of Jews and two kinds of Israelites - the natural and the spiritual and not all Jews are Jews and not all Israel are Israel. He is basically saying that if you are part of God and His promise and connected to Him then you are the real deal.

Not all Israel are of Israel:

*“Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they [are] not all Israel, which are of Israel:”
Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, [are they] all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these [are] not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed”.*

He explained that the Word of God and the promises of God were not false because they were not literally fulfilled to the natural nation, Israel. Neither are the promises delayed and suspended until somewhere in the future for the natural Israel. These promises were always, yes and true. But we have to understand to whom these promises were made.

“For all the promises of God in Him [are] yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”

(2 Co 1: 20 NKJV)

In South Africa we have many almost unbelievable advertisements and promises on television but they always end with the words: “terms and conditions apply.”

In the Word of God all promises are only valid in Him. Outside of Christ we make them null and void. Christ is the term and condition that applies. Being in Him is the key to all the Promises of God

Paul distinguishes between the Church and Israel, Israel in the flesh and Israel in the spirit Seed of Abraham in the natural and the Seed in the spirit Children in the natural and children in the spirit.

The conclusion of the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem:

After the apostles listened to the testimonies of what happened amongst the gentiles, James quoted from

Amos chapter 9 and that settled the matter in their hearts.

What did Amos say in chapter nine?

"I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and He said: "Strike the doorposts, that the thresholds may shake, and break them on the heads of them all. I will slay the last of them with the sword. He who flees from them shall not get away, and he who escapes from them shall not be delivered." (Amos 9:1 NKJV)

Amos reports on a vision he had, of the Lord standing at the altar. This chapter starts off with a terrible judgment. The Lord stood at the Temple and specifically at the Altar. He commanded the pillars to be struck down so that the whole temple would fall on the heads of the people. Whoever would escape this ordeal would be found and devoured by the sword.

"[Are] you not like the people of Ethiopia to Me, O children of Israel?" says the LORD. "Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, The Philistines from Caphtor, And the Syrians from Kir?"

(Amos 9: 7 NKJV)

If there were any doubt, to which nation the Lord was speaking, it is cleared by the above verse.

He mentions Ethiopia and Egypt, the Philistines and the Syrians and tells Israel that before He called them they were just like all the other nations. He also moved them from their original location. The Lord goes on to identify who He is just in case they don't

know who is speaking and commanding their judgment.

God has always, throughout the ages, employed nations to exercise His judgment on Israel.

"Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD [are] on the sinful kingdom, And I will destroy it from the face of the earth; Yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," Says the LORD." (Amos 9:8 NKJV)

Here the Lord calls Israel a sinful kingdom. What makes this judgment different from all the others, throughout the history of rebellious Israel, is that the judgment starts with the Lord standing at the Temple and commanding it to be smitten. James applies this prophetic word of Amos to the time of the Church and especially the gentiles now turning to Christ.

Hosea, Joel and Malachi and some other Old Testament prophets wrote about this Day of vengeance and coming judgment.

"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts". "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He [is] like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. (Mal 2:4 NKJV)

I believe they were prophetically seeing the Lord Jesus, in the future, standing at the Temple in

Matthew 24 just before the Cross and pronouncing judgment over the sinful kingdom of Israel. The whole of Matthew 24 is about the day of God's judgment over the sinful nation which rejected their Messiah. They were warned about the coming day of the Lord.

I believe the day of the Lord started when Jesus was rejected. The day of the Lord is not a twenty-four hour day but an appointed time and season in the Lord.

The builders rejected the Precious Stone and God made it the Cornerstone in Zion.

Listen to what the Psalmist says about the day of the Lord.

“The stone [which] the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing; It [is] marvelous in our eyes. This [is] the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

(Ps 118: 22-24 NKJV)

“Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not [one] stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

(Matt 24: 1-2 NKJV)

Jesus described a terrible tribulation where there will be no place to hide. Not even the mountains and rocks will give protection in that day. In Matthew 24 Jesus basically confirms what Amos and the other prophets had already said. Amos said that even if you hide in

the depth of the ocean the snake will find and bite you.

The reason for this terrible judgment was to separate the sinners out of Israel and keep the true Israel, the Israel of God. For Paul said: “not all Israel is Israel”.

Jesus said in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 that the separation would be like the days of Noah; it would take out and destroy all the sinners, as the flood did with the sinners of his day, but will safely protect the remnant.

Even Paul quotes the prophets concerning this day:

“Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. (Rom 9:27)

John the Baptist said that the Lord is at the threshing floor and has His winnowing fan in His hand. He will clear his threshing floor through and through. He will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire and the corn He will gather into His barn.

He also announced to Israel that the axe is at the root of the tree and of all the trees.

“And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matt 3:10 NKJV)

Trees in the Bible normally depict nations or people.

He calls the Pharisees a brood of vipers and tells them not to boast on the fact that Abraham is their father.

"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as [our] father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

(Luke 3: 8 NKJV)

Truly, the coming of the Lord to His temple and to His own brings with it both judgment and salvation.

Amos's account of the Lord's judgment has the Lord standing at the Altar. We know that the Altar is made out of brass and brass is the symbol of redemption and the Cross. This is a picture of Calvary, the Lamb slain for the sins of the world.

The Old Testament does not only tell us of wonderful blessings for those who obey the Law, but also of the curses for those who don't. Before Joshua took the nation of Israel into the promise land, Moses made six tribes stand on Mount Gerizim to announce the blessings of the Law over the nation if they keep the Law. Six tribes stood on Mount Ebal to announce the curses of the Law if the nation did not keep the Law (Deut 26).

When we look at the list of the curses for disobeying the Law in Deut 28, they outnumber the blessings by far. The prophets warned them that God's judgment was coming because of their disobedience and rebellion. Their captivity under Nebuchadnezzar, the evil king of Babylon, was one of the many judgments

that came their way. God always used evil kings and nations to exercise His judgment on His people, Israel. It must have been very difficult for a sinner to keep the Law.

Amos, Joel, Hosea, Malachi and many other prophets were prophesying about a final purification and separation of all the sinners of Israel. Amos said that in the process not all of Jacob would be destroyed; only the sinners and there would always be a remnant. This concept of the remnant is mentioned by most of the prophets. Amongst the masses there will always be the faithful few. There were the 300 of Gideon's army that God could use against the enemy and the 7000 in the days of Elijah who did not bow the knee before Baal.

"Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD [are] on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," Says the LORD."
(Amos 9:8 NKJV)

When Jesus came to Israel He spoke to the Jewish leaders through parables. He told them what would happen to them if they rejected God's plan for their salvation.

Israel - the Vineyard and the Kingdom:

In Matthew 21:33-44 Jesus explains to the Pharisees the application of the Word of God to Isaiah, the prophet.

In Isaiah 5:1-7, God poses a question to Israel through the prophet:

“What more could have been done to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Why then, have I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?”
(Is 5: 4NKJV)

Then He answers His own question:

“Now please let me tell you what I will do to my Vineyard” “I will lay it waste” (verse 5)

The Lord makes a very important statement:

“For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel” (verse 7)

Jesus used the Old Testament scriptures when He spoke to the Jews, for they were well acquainted with it. He concluded by saying to Israel in Matthew 21 that during vintage time the Owner sent His Son, thinking that when the servants saw the Son, the heir, they would recognize Him and treat Him better than the messengers, the prophets.

But they killed Him, not because they did not know that He was the Son of the Owner, because they said:

“There is the heir, let's kill him and take the vineyard for ourselves”.

Jesus explained to the Pharisees that the vineyard is the kingdom of God. It was leased to Israel who was

supposed to produce Kingdom fruit in the time of harvest. Fruit like righteousness, peace and joy! But they never did produce the required fruit.

Jesus, like God in the Old Testament, asked a question to those whom He addressed:

"Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease [his] vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it." "And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." "Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them." (Matt 21:40-45 NKJV)

Jesus told them that the kingdom would be taken from Israel and given to a nation bearing Kingdom fruit. This Nation is the Church.

Amos is exactly describing this same scenario to us. The Lord is standing at the temple and announcing judgment on the sinners among His people.

Jesus also told Israel another parable of the Good man who sowed good seed in his field and the bad man who sowed bad seed in his field. At the time of

the harvest there will be a separation of the bad seed (sons of the wicked one) out of the Kingdom of the sons (Matt 13: 24-43).

Amos continues to say that after the Lord announced judgment, He turns His attention to all the nations with an incredible word.

The Holy Spirit revealed to James the relevance of Amos' prophetic word at that apostolic meeting.

The amazing thing about this word is that it is in the Old Testament.

"For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, As [grain] is sifted in a sieve; Yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.
(Amos 9: 9)

Now this verse kept me awake through the night. It would not leave me. The Holy Spirit spoke to me about the significance of this word.

The purpose of sifting is separation of the precious and the vile, to secure and protect the real seed. So surely Amos is describing the time of harvest.

The Lord is standing at the Altar (Calvary) and commands the house of Israel to be sifted amongst the nations. He is revealing a mystery that was not even known before: that God has a people amongst all the nations, and that the time has come to reveal who the real House of Israel is. Therefore He commands the House of Israel to be sifted amongst the nations. He has a sieve in His hand and sifts the nations with

it. The measure and the standard of the sieve is Himself. He is the standard and metron of the true Israel of God. For Israel is the name given to the firstborn son. This sieve would not let the least of the real Israel of God fall through.

The Lord showed Amos that He is returning to all the nations and would build his House from those that do not fall through His sieve. But this house is not built on the Law and the Old Testament.

This is what the Holy Spirit showed the apostle James that day.

"On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; That they may possess the remnant of Edom And all the Gentiles who are called by My name," Says the LORD who does this thing." (Amos 9:11-12 NKJV)

The apostle James declared to the apostolic council that the fulfillment of what Amos was saying has come, and God is busy sifting the nations to find the house of Israel amongst them; all those who are called by His Name. He who knows the hearts and the requirements of being Israel will rebuild the everlasting household of David. Yes, the tabernacle of David that lies in ruins!

EVEN ABRAHAM WAS LOOKING FOR THIS CITY.

"By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as [in] a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob,

the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker [is] God.” (Heb 11:9-10 NKJV)

Matthew Chapter One puts David before Abraham.

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: (Matt 1:1)

Historically David came later but David had the eternal pattern of God's presence and dwelling.

The ancient, eternal pattern of God's dwelling is “Father and son”. It was more complete than the Tabernacle of Moses which referred to that of “servant and Master.” Under the Law the tabernacle of Moses was the only way God could manifest His presence.

The Tabernacle of David.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the nations and their inclusion in the Church by grace, without the Law of Moses, was settled in the hearts of the apostles and elders.

James stood up and quoted from Amos the prophet that said there would come a time that God would return to restore the Tabernacle of David that has fallen down and restore it. James declared that, that time has come. It has come to its fullness with the salvation, baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit of the non-Jewish nations. God treated them just like Israel but without the Law and circumcision.

We must conclude then that the Church is founded on the principles of the Tabernacle of David in the Old Testament. He must have captured the eternal principles in God's heart that constitute His dwelling. If David's tabernacle is the pattern for the New Testament Church then we must understand the principles he captured which we should establish in our households.

AMOS:

"On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; That they may possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name," Says the LORD who does this thing.

Amos 9: 11-12 NKJV

ACTS:

"And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:' After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things".

Acts 15: 15-17:

Why would God return to David's tabernacle and restore it and rebuild it and not Solomon's Temple? We know of the splendor of the temple of Solomon and its beauty, but what made David's tabernacle so special? What were the qualities of David's Tabernacle that it constitutes the New Testament Church? Why is the tabernacle of David the prototype of the eternal Church that includes all tribes and all nations called

by His Name? Why would God call these people the captives of Israel that He would bring back?

Let's first look at the Tabernacle of Moses.

The Tabernacle of Moses:

The pattern of this tabernacle was given to Moses on Mount Sinai at their exit from Egypt. God gave him the pattern and instructed him to build it exactly as he saw it. This Tabernacle had three parts.

- A. An Outer-court
- B. A Holy Place
- C. A Most Holy Place.

The Outer court : (Jesus the Savior) There were two pieces of furniture:

The brazen altar (cross) and the Brazen Laver (Baptism).

Holy Place: (Christ the Anointed one) There were three pieces of furniture:

Candle stick. (Jesus the Light of the World)

The table of showbread. (Jesus the Bread of Life.)

Golden incense. (Jesus the Bosom of the Father)

Most Holy Place: (Jesus the Lord) Had one piece of furniture:

The Ark of Covenant (The Throne of Grace) had a solid golden lid called the Mercy seat with two golden cherubim over it and inside this golden box were:

Tablets of the Law.

The staff of Aaron that budded.

A golden bowl with manna.

1 Samuel tells us that the two evil sons of Eli took the Ark of Covenant to war and lost it in battle to the Philistines. After some time the Philistines sent it back and it ended up in the house of a man called Abinadab and there it remained for about forty years.

The sad thing was that for forty years during the reign of Saul the first king of Israel, the Tabernacle of Moses was pitched on Mount Gibeon, but behind the Veil, for there was no Ark of Covenant carrying the glory of God. For “God dwells between the cherubim”.

God said this about the Ark of Covenant; that He will meet with the nation there, and will also give them instructions from there (Ex 25: 21-22).

Just imagine, every day Church as usual, for forty years one whole generation, but no presence of God and no glory!

They go to the meeting but there is no meeting with God. They go to hear His Word but there are no instruction and no Word.

The High priest went behind the veil for forty years with blood but there were no Ark of Covenant to sprinkle it on.

Saul, during his reign, never desired to restore the presence of God according to the instruction given by God.

On Mount Gibeon stood the tabernacle of Moses with an empty Holy of Holies and no one cared about it for forty years.

The first thing David wanted to do when he came in power was to restore the Ark of Covenant and bring back God's presence.

This tells us all about the kind of man David was. God was his highest priority.

What made David, as a man, so special?

Consider the following dynamic facts about David:

*David is mentioned almost 2000 times in Bible; ten times more than Abraham.

*No one else in history was ever called by God: "a man after My own heart." (1 Sam13:14)

*David was God's standard by which all kings of Judah and Israel were measured.

*The Bible says David had a perfect heart.

*Although Abraham lived historically for about 500 years before David, God said that He made David His Firstborn son.

"I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David": 'Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.'
Selah. (Ps: 89: 3-4) NKJV

"He shall cry to Me, 'You [are] my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.' Also I will make him [My] firstborn,(son) the highest of the kings of the earth."
(Ps 89: 26-27) NKJV

*David lived as a son of God. It was to him and his seed that God promised:

"I will be his Father and he shall be my son." (2 Sam 7:14 NKJV)

Sonship is a New Testament concept and reality. The best one could aspire to before the Cross was to be called a servant and friend.

Even the greatest man and prophet ever born of a woman, John the Baptist, said he is the "friend" of the Bridegroom.

At the Passover meal, Jesus said to His disciples that He calls them no longer servants but friends for He told them everything the Father told Him.

"You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15: 14-15 NKJV)

It was only after the Cross that He said to Mary:

“Go and tell my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and their Father....’” (John 12: 17 NKJV)

By this He implied that they were now sons of God like Him.

*But David lived like a son of God in the time before the Cross.

David the first-born:

In the natural, David was the last born son of Jesse but God took the last and made him the first. This is a principle of God throughout the Bible and it's very important when we look at the natural and the spiritual Israel: “the first shall be last and the last shall be first.” Whatever is first on God’s mind He creates last and what is last He creates first. Man was always first on his heart but he creates man only on the last day.

David being called the “first born ” has special significance:

The first, of all things belongs to God.

"Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, [both] of man and beast; it is Mine." (Ex13: 2)

The first-fruits

First fruits belong to God and is most holy unto Him. If dedicated to God it becomes the guarantee, the blessing and quality of the rest of the harvest.

Firstborn has to do with sonship:

*David was the only man in the Old Testament who was spoken to as a son. Although the blood of the Lamb would only hundreds of years later restore men back as sons of God, David lived and experienced the reality of a firstborn son. He was not only a servant but also a son and heir of God.

A servant doesn't stay in the house but serves the house and moves in and out as the O.T. priests did. But a son remains in the house.

Jesus said: "*A slave does not abide in the house forever but a son abides forever*". (John 8:35)

David wrote in his famous Psalm 23:

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

The name "Firstborn son" is also used for the nation of Israel. God told Moses to tell Pharaoh that Israel is His firstborn son: "*Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Israel [is] My son, My firstborn.*" (Ex 4:22)

Christ the firstborn son:

We know God's Firstborn Son is His Son, Jesus the Christ. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (Col 1:15NKJV; Heb 1: 3-5)

Sonship was what God had in mind when He created man.

Not only in an individual as in Jacob but also as Israel, a corporate nation that carries the Name of the Lord. *"The Church of the firstborn," "...to the general assembly and church of the firstborn..."* (Heb 12:23 NKJV)

The name Israel was always associated with the idea of a firstborn.

The Eternal Father, living in sons, expresses His image and likeness in creation. Man was supposed to be a ruling and reigning son. God does not only want individual sons, but also a household, family and a nation that He can call His firstborn son.

This is what the Kingdom of God is about. Sonship! The Kingdom belongs to the Son and sons. No wonder the everlasting Kingdom and ruler ship is promised to David as a son.

The New Testament says:

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love".
(Col 1: 13 NKJV)

The New Testament, in Matthew, starts by putting David before Abraham.

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham”. (Matt 1:1)

*The Tabernacle of David had no outer beauty; it was simplistic. A simple movable tent! This to me symbolizes man as God’s dwelling. Man has been created to house God’s image and likeness.

It was different to Moses’ Tabernacle.

*There was no Veil in the Tabernacle of David that separated the Holy place from the most Holy Place. The Veil symbolizes the sinful flesh that separates the sinner from God, who is holy.

David’s Tabernacle is prophetic because it shows a tabernacle where the flesh (veil) has been done away with.

Christ removed the veil when He died on the Cross. When Jesus called out, “it is finished”, the veil was torn from the top to the bottom. Paul calls it the circumcision of the heart. The sinful flesh had been dealt with. Therefore, David’s tabernacle speaks of the finished work of Christ on the Cross.

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh.” (Heb 10:19-20 NKJV)

Paul tells us that in Christ, the veil of the Law is being removed.

“Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away”.(2Co 3:16 NKJV)

*This meant in David's Tabernacle the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies were one, no separation. This pictured an administration of God where there is no separation between Jew and gentile because of the blood of the Lamb. No veil means that the sin barrier is removed. Even the veil that covered the nations and separated them from God has been removed.

*“And He will destroy on this mountain [Calvary]the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.” (Is 25: 7 NKJV)
[brackets inserted are mine]*

*David's Tabernacle needed no earthly High Priest to go beyond the veil once a year with the blood of a bull because of the sin the nation committed. There was free access to David into the Holy of Holies all year round. Here, David entered boldly with a pure heart. David's Tabernacle had a different priesthood, not Levitical (the Law), but consisted of grace and mercy for David was of the tribe of Judah (as Christ).

*David was king, priest and prophet from Judah; truly the priesthood has changed. On mount Gibeon the Law ruled but here in Zion, grace ruled.

This was a Melchizedek order, an order of Kings and Priests. This is the order of the Christ and the kingdom of God. And this is the order of the eternal Church.

*There was no altar outside the tabernacle where the blood of animals was shed. For Christ is the Lamb and the Altar. In Christ it is all done, once and for all He shed His blood.

*David entered in through relationship and worship.

*There was no Holy Place with a candlestick and showbread and table of incense. The Most Holy Place has swallowed up the Outer Court and the Holy Place. All things are in Him, our Ark of Covenant. He is the brazen Altar, the brazen Laver, the Showbread, the Candlestick, and the Altar of incense. Yes, He is our Ark of Covenant.

*This house of David was movable. This was not like religion where you had to go to a specific place and do specific rituals.

*The thing about this Tabernacle was that David brought it home to his dwelling in Zion. He could abide in the House of the Lord forever (Ps 91). Surely goodness and mercy followed David all the days of his life (Ps 23).

*David did not follow the House; the House followed David.

***David became the dwelling of the Lord and his heart the Throne and Holy of Holies. The ark of Covenant with the manna, the anointed staff and the Law of the Lord were hidden in his heart.**

This is what was destroyed when David died and this is what God said He would return and rebuild. Moses' Tabernacle was a daily ritual; David's a daily lifestyle.

*David did not have to go up to the feasts in Jerusalem, three times a year as the Lord commanded the people through Moses. For David lived in Zion, he made his house in Zion. He feasted all year round in the presence of the Lord.

Yes, David's life was a feast. David became God's feast. Nations could come and feast on the goodness of God in His Life.

*Yes, the Tabernacle of David is the lifestyle of a Son of God in the presence of his Father.

“Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven.”

A royal priesthood and kingdom people who dwell in the shadow of the Almighty abide under His wings!

This was what was in God's mind from the beginning. David a man after the heart of God captures the heart of God and builds a Tabernacle in the Old Testament after the eternal pattern of the Son of God.

David was a man of obedience and Abraham was a man of faith.

Abraham lived by faith before the Law.

*David lived by obedience during the time of the Law. Obedience and Faith are eternal principles and cannot be trapped in time; it transcends it . Obedience and Faith are in the realm of Ancient of Days (El-Olam, Timeless-One, Eternal One).

But obedience was before faith. Adam and Eve were not required to live by faith but by obedience. Now after the fall God expects man to live by faith. But faith must take man back to Eden where he again will live by obedience.

Man needs faith to come to sonship but sons live by obedience.

This is why David could eat of the showbread that was only given to priests. He went into the most Holy Place

without the blood of a bull and did not die. This man was the seed of Abraham and carrier of the Seed of Abraham.

**Why was this Tabernacle in ruins?
Truly David is what is called Israel.**

I believe there was no man like David. A man to whom God would say that David found grace and could not build God another house for he was God's dwelling. Only Solomon could build a house for God because he did not find the grace like David, his father.

Acts 7: 44-47 "Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen, which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David, who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob."

* David's Tabernacle captured the heart of God. I believe Solomon had to build God a Temple and David, his father, made all the preparations for it. Solomon's temple took all Israel back to the Law because they would die if they tried to do what David did without the heart of David.

But this is what God always wanted. And now in the New Testament God is restoring the Tabernacle of David, a Royal Priesthood, one holy nation called by His Name, 'Israel'; washed by His blood coming from all nations and living without a veil. Everyone being a

part of God's Israel, and living as kings, priests and prophets!

When James quoted Amos the peace of God came into the meeting and the issue was settled. The Lord treated the heathens like Israel, by pouring out his Spirit on them as on the Jewish believers. They do not have to be circumcised for they are part of God's Israel according to the spirit and not the flesh.

They send messengers to the heathen believers with the message:

"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us...
(Act15: 28)

They told the gentile believers that they do not have to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. Just keep away from sacrifices made to idols and sexual impurity.

When the Church heard this they rejoiced. To be His nation now in the New Testament you are not required to join the natural Israel through circumcision and the Law. No! God's Israel has now shifted from the Temple of Moses to the Tabernacle of David.

Christ, in His resurrection, shifted the throne of David from the natural to the eternal, from the natural Jerusalem to the Heavenly Jerusalem and is now seated on the throne of David on the right hand of His Father (2Sam 7: and Act 2).

Peter confirms that Christ has risen and ascended to sit on the throne of David. Christ will return but not to sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem. He is king already and seated presently on the throne of David as God promised Him.

"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom

"He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

"I will be his Father, and he shall be My son... "

(2 Sam7: 12-14 NKJV)

"Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, "he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption".

(Acts 2: 30-31 NKJV)

The origin of the Name "Israel"

The name Israel was given to Jacob by an angel after a struggle between Jacob and the Angel. Let's look at this all important event and try to understand what happened that night.

Jacob, the son of Isaac deceived his brother Esau and his father to get the blessing of the firstborn. It was prophesied to him at his birth that although he was the younger of the twin brothers his older brother would serve him.

The Lord spoke to Rebecca, the Syrian wife of Isaac:

“And the LORD said to her: “Two nations [are] in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; [One] people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger.” (Gen 25: 23 NKJV)

Jacob the younger was born second but he was holding unto the heel of his older brother Esau. This is why he received the name Jacob.

:Ja-Kof” means“ יַעֲקֹב

Heel catcher, also: sup planter and deceiver.

True to his name, meaning deceiver, he deceived his father to get the blessing of the firstborn. He pretended that he was Esau and his father who could not see, blessed him with the blessing of Abraham and Isaac. Yes, the first-born blessing was bestowed upon Jacob. But he had to flee from his brother who wanted to kill him for defrauding him. He went to Laban, his mother's brother.

There he married both the daughters of Laban who also made Jacob serve him for 14 years. Laban also defrauded Jacob many times. After about 20 years of serving his Uncle Laban, Jacob was ordered by an angel to leave and return to his father in Canaan.

Jacob and the Angel:

There was the angel that instructed Jacob in times of need. This Angel met Jacob on his way to Laban. He

once gave strategy to Jacob concerning the sheep and the goats of Laban. Now he instructs him to return to his family.

"Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, 'Jacob.' And I said, 'Here I am. (Gen 31:11)

"I [am] the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar [and] where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family." (Gen 31:13)

This Angel of God also appeared to Abraham and Isaac. Here He identifies Himself as the God of Bethel. On His way back Jacob hears the news that Esau his brother is on his way with 400 men with him. Jacob divides his camp in two and sends some gifts to Esau. That night before he faced his brother Jacob was alone at a brook called Jabbok.

"Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day." Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day is breaking. And he said, I will not let You go, except You bless me. And he said unto him, What's your name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince you have power with God and with men, and has prevailed. (Gen. 32:24-26)

The Man said to Jacob: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel."

Yisrael= Israel: is derived from the following composition of Hebrew words:

Sar:	A prince
Sarah:	He ruled as a prince
El:	God
Raah	He saw

Then Israel called the place Pieniel (Gen 32:30)

Jacob responded to his experience with this Man: He named the place where he had this encounter: "Peniel"

,Peniel," faces of God, or of Elohim" פניאל

He said in the Hebrew language:

raithi Elohim panim el" : ראיתי אלהים פנים אל פנים :
,.panim", i.e

"I have seen the Elohim faces to faces, (i.e., fully and completely, without any medium),

vattinnatsel napshi,: "and my soul is : ותנצל נפשי :
".redeemed

I believe this was not a natural Man that wrestled with Jacob but Christ the Lord The Son himself.

a) In the naming of the place, Jacob said: "I saw Elohim face to face." We know what Paul said about the glory of God:

“...The knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”. (2Co 4:6 NKJV)

The Name Israel:

Israel is a name given to a man or woman who has a face-to-face encounter with God and whose nature is changed. This would be equivalent to the born-again experience that Paul the apostle had on the Damascus road. He also met a Man and when he asked His name, this Man replied: *“I am Jesus whom you persecute”*.

At the break of the new day Jacob refused to let the Man go. He said to the Man, *“bless me or I will not let you go.”*

The Man asked him what was his name. To which he replied: *“My name is Jacob.”*

Many years ago Jacob also wanted the blessing of the first-born from his father. That day when he was asked by his blind father Isaac, he said: *“I am Esau your firstborn.”* (Gen. 27:19 NKJV)

That day His father said to him:

“...Cursed be everyone who curses you and blessed be everyone who blesses you.” (Gen 27: 29)

But now Jacob, the deceiver repents and he acknowledges that he is Jacob. The Man replied by saying that he will not be called Jacob any longer but

Israel. The blessing of Jacob was in the Name of the Man: "Israel".

Jacob did not expect this. He thought the Man would bless him like his father did by speaking and prophesying blessing over him about his future. Instead he hit him on his hip (thigh) and dislocated it and then changed his name to Israel. The Man did not by accident miss his head and got his thigh. No, the dislocation of his thigh was deliberate and has great significance.

Israel first-born son:

This name Israel is a very important name given by God to Jacob. Normally when God wanted a man to have a certain name He would tell the parents beforehand.

To Abraham God gave his name personally and now also to Jacob. A name as we have seen throughout the Bible describes nature. In the name Israel was the blessing of the first-born son. It implied double blessings. Israel means ruler or king with God and man. This is a Kingdom name, it defines a son ruling and reigning.

I believe the Man who changed Jacob's name did not only give him the name Israel and blessed Jacob as a first-born son, but this Man was God's Firstborn Himself. This is Christ manifested in the Old Covenant. This Man would come in the fullness of time and manifest this name and nature to the world. When Jacob asked Him His name this Man avoided answering the question.

“Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell [me] Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why [is] it [that] you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there.”

(Gen. 32: 29 NKJV)

The Blessing of the children of Israel:

The priest was instructed to bless the children of Israel in the following way:

"Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: "The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace."

"So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

(Num 6:23-27)

When Jesus after His resurrection appeared to the two on the road to Emmaus He used the Law and the Prophets and showed Himself through it to them. I think part of His conversation with them was:

“... you remember the man who wrestled with Jacob through the night, the man who changed his name to Israel, and did not want to reveal his name to Jacob? I am that man!”

Not only did Christ carry the name Israel to Jacob but He wanted to make sure that the carrier of this name complies in nature of the name. This name implies first-born, a son ruling the household of the father. It

would play a major role in world history and in the eternal plan of God.

This is why He hit Jacob on his thigh and dislocated it.

The thigh has great symbolic meaning in the Bible:

*The hip or thigh of a man symbolizes his ability and strength.

*The thigh makes a man walk in a certain posture and therefore also speaks of lifestyle.

*The thigh is connected to the loins and it plays a very important physical role in the process of procreation.

*The thigh and loins also have to do with your ability to generate children. Your future depends on it.

So when Christ stroke him on the thigh He touched his future generations.

The right thigh also was most holy unto the Lord. It was given to the priest. The priest heaved it up to the Lord as a heave offering. Yes, the thigh spoke of the first fruits. When Christ touched him on the thigh He declared that Israel is a most holy offering to Him, a living sacrifice.

“Also the right thigh you shall give to the priest [as] a heave offering from the sacrifices of your peace offerings.”
(Lev 7: 32 NKJV)

“For the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering I have taken from the children of Israel, from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and I have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons from the children of Israel by a statute forever.”

(Lev 7: 34 NKJV)

When Abraham asked his servant to fetch a bride for Isaac, his son, he made him place his hand under his thigh and swear that he would not take Isaac back to Syria.

“So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.”
(Gen. 24: 9)

When Jacob, now Israel, died in Egypt he called for his son Joseph to place his hand under his thigh and make an oath to him that he will not bury him in Egypt.

“When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, “Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt.”
(Gen. 47:29 NKJV)

It must have been something for Joseph to touch and feel the thigh of Jacob that was dislocated by the Lord. Joseph also received a double portion, the blessing of a first-born just like Jacob his father. Both received it by grace for they did not qualify by their order of birth.

Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh would become part of the 12 tribes of the nation later called Israel. Ephraim would be the leading tribe of the northern ten tribes later called Israel.

Touching the dislocated thigh of Israel his father must have reminded him again of the destiny of Israel. Not by the might or ability of a man but being touched and anointed by God makes you worthy of the name and nature of Israel. When touched by God your nature and way of life changes.

The migration of the name Israel:

When God gave Jacob the name Israel he touched his hip so as to say these two go together, you cannot have the one without the other. The name Israel belongs to a man who had a face-to-face encounter with God and whose walk He has apprehended.

Although this name Israel was given to an individual called Jacob, God always wanted a nation to be called by the name Israel, a nation of overcomers ruling and reigning and showing the nature of the One who gave them the Name. A royal Priesthood and holy nation called by His name!

Israel was not supposed to be only a first-born individual but also a first-born nation, a first fruit company for God amongst the nations, a kingdom people ruling with God and man.

Israel is God's son his Firstborn:

After 430 years in Egypt, God speaks to Moses:

"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Israel [is] My son, My firstborn. 'So I say to you, let My

son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn."

Ex 4: 23-24 NKJV)

A migration has taken place from one man to a whole nation. The significance of this statement, God made to Moses is that God called a whole nation as his firstborn son. So one man Jacob now became a whole nation called by the name Israel.

But God adds revelation and insight to the name Israel. He says: "*Israel is My firstborn son.*" This statement is loaded. We know that God's firstborn son is Jesus Christ. Here, in Exodus God says Israel is his firstborn son. This is a mystery. Israel and Christ are both called God's firstborn son. Could it be that the name Israel has more to it than what we have thought? Could it be that Christ and Israel are connected in a mysterious way? Could it be that the One that gave the name Israel to Jacob that day and the Name are connected? Could it be possible that the Man gave Him His Name?

Here a corporate nation of millions of people are now spoken of in a singular way: "Israel my firstborn son." God now calls Israel as His firstborn son out of Egypt.

The moment God delivers this nation from Egyptian slavery He calls them Israel and firstborn son. We see that sonship and Israel are divinely connected.

We cannot stay in unbelief and sin (Egypt) and be called Israel and firstborn son. Son and Israel are for delivered people, those who have been called out of

darkness into His marvellous light and who walk in relationship with God their Father.

So God called His son from Egypt!

Now this gets more interesting and exciting when we read what the prophet Hosea says hundreds of years later:

"When Israel [was] a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son." (Hosea 11: 1 NKJV)

So Hosea confirms the word of God to Moses.

But it is the apostle Matthew, in the New Testament, who brings an awesome dynamic to this whole issue of God's Son and Israel. He revealed an amazing truth by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew writes in chapter 2 verses 13-15:

"Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." "When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

God said that Israel is His firstborn son and he warned Pharaoh to let His firstborn son go. Failure to

do this would result in his firstborn son dying. History tells us how serious God was about His firstborn. The night Israel left Egypt it was at the cost of every single firstborn in Egypt of man and beast.

In Israel a lamb of the first year was sacrificed in the place of the first born of every household of Israel. Here we see the connection between the Lamb and the Firstborn son. We know that the lamb in the Old Testament is a picture of Christ, the Lamb of God. Here Matthew says that the young child Jesus is Israel the son that God called out of Egypt.

I know it is a mouthful but let's summarise the main truth in this revelation:

The natural nation Israel called out of Egypt is a shadow and a type of Jesus Christ the son of God called from Egypt.

Just like Jacob, one man, given the name Israel and seen as a firstborn of God became a nation, so Jesus, one Man called firstborn became a firstborn nation called the son and Israel of God.

Now I can understand the revelation of the apostle Paul when he said:

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy [be] upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”

Paul makes the very important statement that the Israel of God is not about circumcision or

uncircumcision but a new creation in Christ. He says that peace and mercy belong to them.

You cannot call yourself Israel by your natural birth, lineage or genealogy.

This is why Paul makes a very important statement that all of Israel will be saved.

What does this mean?

Let me first say what it doesn't mean.

It doesn't mean that all of the natural people living in the Middle East circumcised and keeping the Law of Moses and called by the name Israel will be saved.

Paul and all the Prophets already settled that question. Not all in the natural but all who are Israel indeed will be saved. Those who have by faith received the grace of God to be called out of Sin (Egypt)! Yes, the remnant will be saved. The remnant is those who remain faithful to the very nature of the name, Israel.

Here are the Testimony of the Prophets:

"Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, And all the remnant of the house of Israel, Who have been upheld [by Me] from birth, Who have been carried from the womb".

(Is 46: 3 NKJV)

"Thus says the LORD of hosts: "They shall thoroughly glean as a vine the remnant of Israel; As a grape-gatherer, put your hand back into the branches."

(Jer. 6: 9 NKJV)

The residue of My people shall plunder them, And the remnant of My people shall possess them."

(Zep. 2:9 NKJV)

"The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness And speak no lies, Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; For they shall feed [their] flocks and lie down, And no one shall make [them] afraid."

(Zep. 3:13 NKJV)

"With all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the LORD."

(Hag 1:12 NKJV)

'For the seed [shall be] prosperous, The vine shall give its fruit, The ground shall give her increase, And the heavens shall give their dew--I will cause the remnant of this people To possess all these.' (Zec 8:12 NKJV)

"But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city."

Zec 14: 2 NKJV)

Paul confirms the statements of the OT Prophets:

"Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved." (Rom 9:27 NKJV)

“Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” (Rom 11:5 NKJV)

What does it mean when Paul says that “all Israel will be saved”? He says that those of the natural Israel who do not remain in unbelief will be saved and will be reconnected to Christ, the Olive Tree.

And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

And so all Israel will be saved:

“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;”

David says:

“Oh, that the salvation of Israel [would come] out of Zion! When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people, Let Jacob rejoice [and] Israel be glad.”

(Ps14:7; 53:6 NKJV)

These are the prophetic word about the restoration and rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David in Amos.

“I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit [them]; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.”

The salvation of all Israel and the return of the captives that Paul is referring to, is what James the

Apostle refers to in Acts 15. The restoration of the Tabernacle of David, which speaks of the Church of the Lord, is made up of Jew and Greek, male and female, slave and free.

Closing remarks:

This document was written to help us understand that biblically those who in Christ are the true Israel of God.

That Israel in the Middle East has played a very important role in the redemptive plan of God in the Old Testament. Their role started with the Law and the Prophets and ended with Christ. Luke writes the very words of Jesus in this matter:

“The law and the prophets [were] until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.” (Luke 16:16)

After the Cross, and starting with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has a new creation and in this new order there is a city called Zion or the Jerusalem from above. In this city there is a King who is seated on the throne of His son David. He rules in righteousness and justice. His throne is a throne of grace. He is seated in Zion.

The writer of Hebrews is clear on this matter. He writes that it is a present reality and not a future hope.

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable

company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn [who are] registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect.
(Heb 12: 22-23 NKJV)

He now has a Kingdom people in the earth who are His dwelling. They are the rebuilt tabernacle of David as the prophets and the apostles declared. This new nation does not exclude any nation on the earth. All who are in Christ are part of this new creation, the old things have passed away and all things have become new (2 Co 5: 17).

This nation Paul calls:

The Israel of God.	Gal 6:16
The Seed of Abraham.	Gal 3:16, 29
The new creation.	2Co 5:17
Heirs of God	Gal 3:29
Sons of God	Gal 3:26
The Body of Christ	
The temple of God	
The Church- Ecclesia (called out ones)	

Peter calls them:

A chosen generation a royal priesthood, and holy nation, His own special people (1Pet 2:9).

Jesus calls them:

Brothers.
Kingdom citizens
The Church
Sons of God

So what is the role of the Israel after the flesh. First of all they are a nation like all the other nations of the earth in need of salvation. God loves them; for God so loved the world that He gave His Son. But their redemptive role was fulfilled at the coming of Christ.

Jesus put it this way:

*"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing fruit.
(Matt 21: 43)*

The Church, made up of all nations, is the only temple God will ever acknowledge after Calvary.

There is no Biblical justification to favour any natural nation on the earth as a special nation that should be treated differently from the other nations.

The only nation, city, and people God calls special and holy is the Church made up of all nations. They should be a nation showing all the other nations how to conduct themselves in holiness, truth and justice. The Israel of God is a remnant of God in the earth. This remnant's purpose is to bring redemption to all nations of the world, including the Jews.

So if you want to seek the peace and prosperity of one special city and nation and in return receive peace and prosperity in doing so, it is the Church which is the Israel of God.

8 Nov. Oct 2011

