

## **SESSION 12: JESUS, THE TRUE ISRAEL**

We profoundly believe that the Bible is a “book” that has one single story.

In our last session we saw that Jesus was the Last Adam and the second Man. Jesus brought an end to Adam’s fallen race by being the true and perfect Man. And we looked at his incredibly perfect obedient life, doing only those things that pleased the Father. And through his death and resurrection he gave birth to an entirely new race of humanity. And we, who are born-again, are now part of that new humanity. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus with the fulness of new creation being realized at Christ’s second coming.

It’s important, however, in order to understand the full and more complete story of the Bible, to realize that Jesus was not only the last Adam. He was also the ‘true Israel,’ or the true first-born son of God. Exodus 4:22 says, ‘This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son.’ Jesus not only lived the perfect life of the ‘son of Man,’ He also lived the perfect life of God’s first-born son, Israel.

Is there a distinction? Yes, there is! In choosing Israel, God was choosing a people to work through, to bring his blessing to all the other peoples and people of the world.

This part of God’s plan began in Genesis 12, when God said to Abraham and his family Israel in verse 3, “and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

This idea of having a chosen people to work through continues into the New Testament, with those in Christ now being that chosen people of God. And this idea will continue throughout eternity – in God’s new world!

The firstborn was a special child in a family, and his inheritance was double that of any other family member (Dt 21:15-17). Throughout his life he was being prepared to carry on the family line, the family business and the family’s inheritance.

Israel, as God’s firstborn, was to receive the double portion of God’s blessing, double more than any other nation, not for their sake but for God’s sake, to carry out God’s creation purpose among all the nations of the earth!

Israel, as God’s firstborn, failed to qualify for the double portion of the inheritance and to become God’s heir, to enter into God’s rest and to govern over all the nations of the earth, and in fact, over God’s entire creation project. They were like Reuben,

Jacob's firstborn that was denied the inheritance of the firstborn because he sinned against his father (Gen 35:22).

The double portion inheritance was transferred to Joseph and distributed to his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen 48:5). And this is where Jesus comes in.

Jesus as God's only begotten son (1 Jn 4:9) qualified for the firstborn inheritance through the perfect, loving obedient life he lived. That perfect life that Israel was supposed to live was according to the law God gave Israel on Mt Sinai.

And this is exactly the life Jesus lived.

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

And it's very interesting to discover that Mathew, in writing his gospel for a Jewish audience, traces the footsteps of Jesus' life in such a way so as to demonstrate how Jesus journeyed and completed the very same journey that Israel, the nation, was called to travel but failed to fulfill.

For example; Israel went down into Egypt. Jesus did the same ("out of Egypt have I called my son," Mt 2:15). Israel went through the Red Sea, a symbol of baptism (1Co 10:2). Jesus also went through the waters of baptism to fulfill all righteousness (that is, to do what Israel failed to do in its totality, you see if one part of the law is broken the entire law is broken - Jm 2:10). Israel went into the wilderness and was tested in various ways. Jesus also went into the wilderness and was tested or tempted by the devil (Mt 4:1); And, in the wilderness Israel was given the law at Mt Sinai, to know God's will and to resist sin.

Sadly, in every test they experienced, they failed to obey that law and apply it when tempted. Jesus, in contrast, overcame all the temptations he faced in the wilderness and he did so by quoting, to the devil, the very same scriptures that God gave Israel at Sinai, "It is written...", Jesus would say.

Moses went up into the Mountain (Mt Sinai) and was given the ten commandments for the Children of Israel. Jesus went up on a mountain and gave, to the people of God, what has become known as 'The Sermon on the Mount.'

Moses then came down from Mt Sinai and miraculously feed Israel with manna from heaven. And Jesus came down from the mount and miraculously feed the multitude with loaves of bread.

There is so much more we could talk about in this regard, but let's hastily move to the cross because this was, without question, the most momentous 'steps tracing' part of the journey!

Israel was exiled to Babylon for her rebellion and unrepentant sinfulness.

Israel was banished from God's presence.

Israel the land was the holy land and Jerusalem was the city of God.

On the cross, Jesus entered into Israel's exile, "my God my God why have you forsaken me....." (Mt 27:46). Isaiah says, ".. we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted."

But it wasn't for his own rebellion and sinfulness—he had no sin and he fulfilled the law perfectly. Jesus was the obedient firstborn son of God! God shouted from heaven on several occasions, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." So Isaiah goes onto say, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him..." (Isa 53: 4-5)

When Jesus rose from the dead, Israel's long exile was finally over.

The new exodus, which Israel had been longing for ever since their return from Babylon but never experienced—even though prophets such as Haggai and Zachariah had prophesied it with the promise of God's returning glory—but it never had.

But God is faithful and he is always faithful to his promises, and this promise of a new exodus finally arrived but in a most unexpected way: Not through a military commander such as David, or a deliver from oppressive empire rulers such as Moses was able to do, but through Jesus the one prophesied to "...save his people from their sins." (Mt 1:21)

You see, Israel's real enemy, throughout all the generations, was never a foreign power such as Babylon or Rome. It was SIN!

The Jews were looking for a David, for a Moses, someone to deliver them from enemy occupational forces. But on the Day of Pentecost (fifty days following Christ's resurrection) and through Peter's preaching, 3,000 Jews finally got it (Ac 2:41).

They had their 'aha moment,' as did many others shortly after, and their numbers quickly grew to more than 5,000 (Ac 4:4). And then some 27 years later, James and the elders at Jerusalem in meeting with Paul said, "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed..." (Acts 21:20)

But sadly, the hardness of heart that had plagued the Jews throughout their long history, once again set in, and although since then small numbers of Jews in every generation have been finding Christ, in general we await the Day when, at his

coming, they will “gaze upon him whom they have pierced” and say, “blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Paul, in realizing this and having his message repeatedly rejected by the Jews, said in Acts 18:6 “From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” And in Chapter 28:28 he says, regarding the Gentiles, “...and they will listen.”

So, what is so significant about the Gentiles?

Well, now in Christ, the Gentiles who were once excluded from ‘citizenship in Israel’ and from the ‘covenants and promises’ (Eph 2:12), have now been brought near by the blood of Christ (:13).

This means that we have not only been saved from sin and have been born-again into new creation through Jesus being the Last Adam and the Second Man, but we have also been included in the inheritance of the firstborn: The promise of entering into God’s REST, of ruling and reigning as God’s heir and as joint-heirs now with Christ, in God’s new world and for all eternity!

Salvation, you see, is not about being rescued from hell and living with Jesus, in heaven, for all eternity. It is, through the forgiveness of sins, gaining entrance into God's rest of ruling and reigning with God in God's new world, for all eternity. This is the inheritance of the firstborn son of God, in which we, now in Christ, share!

You might now be, thinking, “Max, praise the Lord, this is now what I have, right? It’s a done deal.”

Well, sadly, many Christians do think that. They think that once they are born again, they have finished the race. Rather we should understand that in Christ, he has qualified us to enter the race and to begin to run the race. We begin the journey towards that promised inheritance. “...And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us...” (Heb 12:1)

And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:24, “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.”

He is not talking about running to get saved – to escape from hell and to get into heaven, or to attained what Jesus achieved for humanity as the Last Adam and the Second Man. No, he is talking about what Jesus achieved as the ‘True Israel,’ God’s firstborn, chosen to be his special people to rule and reign with him over his glorified creation for all eternity!

Or we could change the metaphor, and instead of saying firstborn we could say, bride–the Bride of Christ–being Christ’s eternal companion to rule and reign with

him through all eternity, over God's new heaven and new earth and over all the nations in God's new world.

This is what Paul is talking about when he prayed for the Church at Ephesus. In Ephesians 1:18, Paul says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people..."

May God enlighten all of our hearts, in order that we might know the hope to which he has called us, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people!