

ISRAELOLOGY
Part 4 of 6
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ISRAEL FUTURE
(Part One)

Traditionally Dispensationalists have focused on Israel Future. Except where they have not reached consensus or where they have been unclear, it does not require an extensive treatment.¹ Specific eschatological sections form the divisions of this topic.

Israel and the Church Age

Part 3 of this series discussed how the state of Israel today fits into the prophetic scheme, and that no dispensational principles preclude the fulfillment of certain prophecies about Israel while the Church is still on earth.² The re-establishment of Israel is one such prophecy. Another issue, the Jewish control of Jerusalem, may not extend to the whole city before the Tribulation begins, although the Jewish state must exist by that point. The 1948–49 Israeli War of Independence initiated Israeli control of West Jerusalem, the newer Jewish section. The Old City of Jerusalem (the biblical city) fell into the hands of the Jordanian Legion. Later the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan annexed it. Jerusalem became a divided city and remained so for the next nineteen years.

Nevertheless, prophetically speaking, Jews will control the Old City of Jerusalem. Prophecies concerning the Third Jewish Temple (the Tribulation Temple) establish this. Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4; and Revelation 11:1–2 relate a specific event in the middle of the Tribulation.

The Jewish Temple will be rebuilt and begin functioning again, for these verses view the Temple in operation. They also

¹ For a detailed study of Dispensational Eschatology, see the author's *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1982).

² See *CTS Journal* 5 (October–December 1999): 27–46.

presuppose Jewish control of the Temple Compound, so Jews must possess the Old City of Jerusalem. While no passage tells when it would occur, the 1967 Six-Day War clearly fulfilled it. While Scripture never predicts that war itself, it certainly predicts its result, Jewish control of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Israel and the Tribulation

The Purposes of the Tribulation

Two of the purposes for the Tribulation relate to Israelology. The first purpose is to bring about a worldwide preaching of the Gospel (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 7:1–17). Revelation 7:1–8 gives God’s means for accomplishing the Tribulation’s second purpose. Verses 1–3, commands the four angels commissioned to bring judgment on the earth to wait until a specific number of servants are sealed. It protects them so that they cannot be harmed, either by the judgments poured out by God or by the persecutions of believers. They are also sealed for service, for they are the ones who will proclaim the message of the Gospel in the Tribulation. Verse 4 clearly identifies those sealed as 144,000 Jews.³ Their preaching the Gospel fulfills Matthew 24:14’s prophecy:

*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come.*⁴

Revelation 7:9–17 gives the results of their ministry. In verses 9–10, John saw a multitude of Gentiles from every nationality and language group standing before God’s throne. Verse 9 says that the salvation of these myriads of Gentiles comes *after these things* (the sealing of the 144,000 Jews). Their salvation is the

³ Revelation 7:5–8 clearly identifies the 144,000 as Jews. It lists twelve tribes and specifies that 12,000 are chosen from each listed tribe. Such careful delineation indicates that none are Gentiles. Despite much speculation to the contrary, no exegetical or theological basis exists to support Covenant Theology’s view that they symbolize the Church.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are taken from the *American Standard Version (ASV)*, 1901.

effect of the 144,000's ministry. After describing the worship of the One on the throne (vv. 11–12), the text proceeds to identify these Gentiles who are around the throne (vv. 13–14) as those who have come out of the Great Tribulation. They are saved Gentiles, for they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. Due to the massive persecution that these Tribulation saints have suffered, this passage concludes with a description of the comfort they now enjoy in the presence of God (vv. 15–17).

The Tribulation's second purpose is to break the power or the will of the Jewish nation. Daniel 11:36–12:4 envisions the conditions that will face the prophet's people (Israel) during the Tribulation. Daniel 12:5–7 asks how long it will continue. It will last for three-and-a-half years. This passage then states a goal of the Tribulation: to break the power or the will of the Jewish nation. The Tribulation will not end until God brings about a national regeneration by breaking the will of the holy people. Ezekiel 20:33–38 reveals (through a simile with the Exodus from Egypt) how God will bring about regeneration. After God gathers the Jews from around the world, He will initiate a period of judgment (i.e., the Tribulation). This judgment will purge the rebels from among the Jewish people; the remainder will turn to the Messiah. Only then will He allow the whole nation, a regenerate nation, to enter millennial Israel under King Messiah.

When Does the Tribulation Start?

Dispensationalism recognizes that the Rapture will be pretribulation, but the Rapture will not begin the Tribulation.⁵ Rather, the Tribulation begins with Israel signing a seven-year covenant. Two key passages bear this out.

The first passage is Daniel 9:24–27, the famous prophecy of the *seventy weeks* or *seventy sevens* of the prophet Daniel. It

⁵ Unfortunately, many Dispensationalists have incorrectly assumed that the Rapture begins the Tribulation.

decrees a 490-year period for the Jewish people. Seven years still remain in God's prophetic time-clock for Israel,⁶ the seven years of the Tribulation. The issue now is: What event begins these last seven years? Daniel 9:27 speaks of an individual making a seven-year covenant with the Jewish nation. The *he* refers back to its nearest antecedent which is *the prince that shall come* in verse 26. This person is better known in Christian circles as the Antichrist. When he signs a seven-year covenant with Israel, the last seven years of God's prophetic time-clock for Israel begin ticking away. This and only this is the starting point of the seven years of the Tribulation. Thus, the Rapture does not begin the Tribulation, but the Rapture could come a number of years before the Tribulation. The point is that the signing of the seven-year covenant between Israel and the Antichrist, not anything else, officially begins the Tribulation.

The second passage is Isaiah 28:14–22. In verse 14, God calls the ones making this covenant *scoffers*. He considers them mockers rather than serious leaders. Verse 15 gives the reason for this and provides God's viewpoint of the covenant itself. It is obvious that the leaders of Israel will enter into this covenant to obtain some measure of security and to escape *the overflowing scourge*.⁷ Hence they will believe that entering the covenant will free them from further military invasions. However, God declares that this is not a covenant of life, but a covenant of death. It is not a covenant of heaven, but a covenant of hell. Rather than gaining security, they will gain a strong measure of insecurity. Verse 16 speaks of the Remnant who refuse to enter into the covenant. Verses 17–22 describe the results of the making and the breaking of the covenant. Verses 21–22 emphasize God's wrath as the key result. This passage gives two of the Old Testament names for the Tribulation: *Jehovah's strange work* and *Jehovah's strange act*. These two unusual names arise from the latter phrase in verse 22: . . . *for a decree of destruction have I heard from the Lord,*

⁶ A careful study shows that the first 483 of the 490 years are now history, having been fulfilled by the cutting-off of the Messiah (His death).

⁷ *Flood*, when used symbolically, refers to military invasion.

Jehovah of hosts, upon the whole earth. This heavenly decree is God's response to the covenant that is signed on earth. It is *strange* in that it calls for the destruction of the whole earth. Thus, Isaiah confirms Daniel 9:27's point, that the Tribulation begins with the signing of the seven-year covenant between the leaders of Israel and the Antichrist. Once that covenant is signed, the Tribulation begins and God Himself issues a decree of destruction.

Here, Israelology clarifies specific points of Dispensational Eschatology that have often been unclear and confusing.

Israel in the Tribulation

Though the Great Tribulation will be worldwide, it will particularly affect Israel. This is evident from the massive amount of Old Testament Scripture concerning this time period.

The Time of Jacob's Trouble

The uniqueness of the Tribulation's relationship to Israel is especially brought out in Jeremiah 30:4–7. While the Scriptures have many names for the Great Tribulation, this passage gives a name that directly relates the Tribulation to the Jewish nation: *the time of Jacob's trouble*. While it is true that all will suffer during that time, Israel will suffer more so. This is due to Israel's relationship to God as His firstborn (Exodus 4:22). Therefore, it receives double both in blessing and cursing.⁸ Thus, the Tribulation is uniquely the Time of Jacob's Trouble.

General Description

⁸ Isaiah 40:1–2 and Jeremiah 16:16–18 state the principle that Israel receives double punishment for all her sins.

Isaiah 3:1–4:1 offers a graphic overview of Israel in the Tribulation. Verses 1–15 describe the effects of the Tribulation on the Jewish leaders. This is followed in 3:16–4:1 with a description of the effects on Jewish women. It will involve a removal of their luxury items (3:16–24) and a sharp reduction of the male population until there will be seven Jewish women for each Jewish male (3:25–4:1).

The Day of Jehovah Passages

Five *Day of Jehovah* passages directly relate the Great Tribulation to Israel: first, Ezekiel 13:1–7 describes the Day of Jehovah in relationship to the false Jewish prophets in the Tribulation. The multiplication of false prophets among Israel will require a massive cleansing (Zechariah 13:2–6). Second, Joel 2:1–11 depicts the Day of Jehovah as a time of darkness and invasion. Third, Joel 3:14–17, describes the Day of Jehovah as the time of refuge for Israel. Fourth, Amos 5:18–20, pictures the Day of Jehovah again as a time of darkness. Fifth, Zephaniah 1:7–13 portrays the Day of Jehovah as being especially burdensome on Jerusalem.

Worldwide Anti-Semitism and Persecution of the Jews

The abrogation of the seven-year covenant institutes a worldwide persecution against the Jews. Two key passages describe what will happen to them during the Tribulation.

The first passage is Matthew 24:15–28. Here, Christ provides a warning sign to those Jews living when the covenant is broken and the Abomination of Desolation occurs, which commences the persecution of the Jews (vv. 15–20). He warns that as soon as they hear of that event happening, they are to leave Israel quickly. The emphasis is on a speedy flight due to a worldwide anti-Semitism breaking out at this point. It will continue for the next three-and-a-half years (vv. 21–22). Verses 23–28 contain a special message directed to the believing Remnant within Israel. They must not heed any rumor that the Messiah has returned and so come out of hiding. When the Messiah does return, all will be

able to see Him and it will be known by all. Although all Jews will face persecution, these verses speak of a special attempt to deceive the believing Remnant.

A second passage describing the flight of the Jews from Israel is Revelation 12:1–17. Verses 1–5 summarize the entire life of Jesus, from just before His birth to His ascension. John saw two signs in the heavens. The first sign (vv. 1–2) pictures Israel as a woman (v. 1) a motif taken from the Old Testament concept of Israel as the Wife of Jehovah. The sun, moon, and twelve stars are common Old Testament figures referring to Israel.⁹ Verse two depicts this woman in the final stages of pregnancy about to give birth to a child. The vision, then, is of the nation of Israel just before the birth of the Messiah.¹⁰ Then John described the second sign. The Great Red Dragon is Satan in all his fierceness (v. 3). Verse 4 brings the two signs together. Satan attempted to slaughter the child about to be born. This refers to the slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem in Matthew 2:16–18. Verse 5 points out the failure of Satan’s attempt to destroy the child. The child, destined to rule the nations with a rod of iron, survived until the proper time for His death came. After His resurrection, He ascended into heaven and is presently seated at the right hand of God the Father.

⁹ The Old Testament background for this sign is Joseph’s dream in Genesis 37:9–11. In this context John’s vision can easily be interpreted. The sun represents Jacob, who was renamed Israel, and both these names often represent the entire nation (*e.g.*, Isaiah 40:27; 49:5; Jeremiah 30:10, *et al.*). The moon stands for Rachel, who in turn represents Jewish women, especially Jewish motherhood (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:18). The twelve stars represent Jacob’s twelve sons, who fathered the twelve tribes of Israel. Clearly, then, the Woman arrayed with the sun, moon, and stars represents Israel (not the Church).

¹⁰ This cannot be the Church, because it would be anachronistic for the Church to give birth to Christ; when the opposite is true.

After this historical survey, John's vision moves forward to events that will occur in the middle of the Tribulation, one of which is in verse 6:

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

As in Matthew, the Woman pictured here is in flight. With Satan's attempt to destroy the child thwarted, he turns against the nation that produced Him. Satan's perpetual hatred of Israel is based on the fact that it is through Israel that God will fulfill His program of redemption. Furthermore, this passage specifies the time-span of Israel's flight and hiding as 1,260 days (three-and-a-half years), the second half of the Tribulation.

The next section of this chapter, verses 7–12, gives the cause of Israel's flight. Satan is cast out of his present abode and confined to the earth for the next three-and-a-half years. Verses 7–12 are somewhat parenthetical, providing the reasons for Israel's flight in verse 6.

The next section, verses 13–17, resumes where verse 6 left off. Verse 13 states that once Satan is cast down to earth he persecutes the Woman, Israel. Verse 13 links with verse 6 to give a further explanation for Israel's flight into the wilderness. It also connects with verse 12, which concludes that there was *woe for the earth*, for Satan is *full of wrath*. Since he knows *his time is short*, only three-and-a-half years, he persecutes Israel. In verse 14, Israel flees into the wilderness where she is nourished for a *time, times and a half a time*.¹¹ Verse 15 describes the persecution as flood-waters aimed at drowning or destroying Israel. Again, this symbol (representing a military invasion) will fail to destroy the Jews (v. 16). Israel will successfully elude the invading army in the wilderness. The passage closes by further describing Satan's wrath for failing to destroy the Jews (v. 17). In this

¹¹ This is the same as the three-and-a-half years of verse six.

closing verse (as in Matthew), Satan will then make war specifically against the believing Jewish Remnant, for he now wars with *the rest of the Woman's seed: those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus*. These are all the Jewish believers at that time, including the 144,000.

Satan's Relationship to Israel

Revelation 12:1–17 is the primary passage describing Satan's relationship to Israel during the Tribulation. At that time he will organize a campaign to wipe out the Jews once and for all on the model of the Nazis' "Final Solution."

The Final Result

To what extent will Satan succeed in destroying the Jews? Zechariah 13:8–9 provides the answer:

And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith Jehovah, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part into the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, Jehovah is my God.

In the Holocaust, under Hitler, one-third of the world's Jewish population died. Under the fierce persecution of the Antichrist, controlled and energized by Satan, two-thirds of the Jewish population will die. This will be the largest and most intense persecution of the Jews in history.

Michael's Relationship to Israel

Michael, the Archangel, is also the Chief Prince and the protective guardian angel assigned to Israel. Daniel 12:1 is the key passage regarding his relationship to Israel in the Tribulation:

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

The fact that Israel will survive at all is due to the ministry of the Archangel and Chief Prince, Michael.

The Four Groups of Jews

During the Great Tribulation period four distinct groups of Jews will exist. The first group can be called the Apostate Jews. These are *the many* of Daniel 9:27 who will enter the seven-year covenant that will begin the Tribulation. They will comprise about two-thirds of the nation, and will die in the worldwide persecution in the Tribulation.

The second group is known as the 144,000 Jews. They are part of the one-third that will survive the Tribulation. These are the Jews who will be saved and sealed sometime after the Rapture of the Church. They will be evangelists during the first half of the Tribulation, conducting a worldwide revival.

The third group can be designated as Other Hebrew Christians. These are Jews who will receive the Messiah via the preaching of the 144,000, the Two Witnesses or some other way.

The fourth group is called the Faithful Remnant. They are the key group involved in the second half of the Tribulation, so they require separate discussion.

The City of Refuge

Earlier, mention was made of the Jews in flight, particularly the Faithful Remnant. Thus far, no particular hiding place has been pinpointed. Up to now, three clues have surfaced. One was in Matthew 24:16: *Then let them that are in Judea flee unto the*

mountains. According to this text, the place of flight and refuge is to be the mountains.

Revelation 12:6 gives the second and third clues. Not only must the place of refuge be in the mountains, it must also meet this second requirement of being in *the wilderness*. Thirdly, God prepared the place in the mountainous wilderness in advance, indicating a sufficient place of refuge.

These are the three clues found in passages examined earlier. Although inconclusive, Isaiah 33:13–16 may also bear on its location. Since the context is dealing with end-time events, this passage also distinguishes between the Apostates and the Faithful Remnant regarding their protection and preservation. Verse 16 gives the means by which the Remnant will be protected:

*He shall dwell on high;
His place of defence shall be the munitions of Rocks;
His bread shall be given him;
His waters shall be sure.*

This passage gives some insight as to the nature of the hiding place itself. First, it states that it will be *on high*; that is, in the mountains, anticipating the Matthew passage. Second, it adds that the place of defense will be *the munitions of rocks*, so the very nature of the place will make it easy to defend.

This brings the total to four clues. The refuge will be:

1. In the mountains;
2. In the wilderness;
3. A place prepared in advance;
4. A very rocky defensible place.

Another passage, Micah 2:12, pinpoints the place exactly:

I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as a flock in the midst of their pasture; they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.

The Remnant is gathered together *as the sheep of Bozrah*. The sheep of Bozrah do not differ from other sheep, so this gathering together *as the sheep of Bozrah* specifies that it will occur in Bozrah. This ancient city was located in the region of Mount Seir, a very rocky range of mountains whose name means the “hairy mountains.” This fulfills the requirement of the Matthew passage. It is within the wilderness section of ancient Edom, so it meets the requirement of the Revelation passage. The very nature of the chain of mountains of Mount Seir makes it quite defensible, fulfilling the requirements of the Isaiah passage. Mount Seir is located on the western side of ancient Edom, extending from southeast of the Dead Sea down to the city of Akaba. It towers over the Arabah, part of the Rift Valley from the south shore of the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Eilat. Today, this southern Jordanian city is known as Petra.

The context of Daniel 11:40–45 reveals another reason for choosing this city. This passage concerns the conquests of the Antichrist in the middle of the Tribulation as he begins his political takeover. The key verse bearing upon this discussion is verse 41:

He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.

This passage states that three nations will escape the Antichrist’s worldwide conquests and domination: Edom, Moab and Ammon. These three ancient nations comprise the single modern state of Jordan. The city of Bozrah in Mount Seir is in ancient Edom (southern Jordan). Since this area will escape the Antichrist’s domination, it is logical for the Jews to flee there. Thus, God will provide a city of refuge outside the Antichrist’s domain for the

fleeing Remnant. Furthermore, God will provide them food and water miraculously as they flee and as they hide there.

The Remnant of Israel

The Remnant is that part of Israel that believes in the Messiah. A believing Remnant will exist in the Tribulation.

The Remnant of Israel During the Tribulation

All individual Jewish believers during the seven years of the Tribulation will be part of the Remnant of Israel. These include both the 144,000 Jews and those Jews of Jerusalem who become believers in the middle of the Tribulation (Revelation 11:13). It includes all individual Jews who become believers as a result of the preaching of the 144,000 or the Two Witnesses of Revelation 11. It includes the Remnant of Revelation 12:17, whom Satan will attack in a particular way.

The Faithful Remnant

A large segment of the Jewish population will become members of the Remnant of Israel at the very end of the Tribulation. These can be called the Faithful Remnant. Based upon all the passages involved, this group will comprise the majority of the one-third of the nation that will survive the Tribulation. Throughout the Tribulation they will be unbelievers as far as the Messiahship of Jesus is concerned and also unbelievers as far as the Antichrist is concerned. These are the “non-many” of Daniel 9:27 who will refuse to have anything to do with the covenant. They are the ones who *shall not be in haste* of Isaiah 28:16. They are “faithful” in the sense that they will believe in the God of Israel to the extent of Old Testament revelation and this is their trust. However, at the end, they will come to know Jesus as Messiah.

The Fact of the Remnant

Isaiah 10:20–23 indicates that the Remnant will survive. Verse 20 states that unlike the rest of Israel, they will lean on the Holy One of Israel. In verse 21, Isaiah declares that ultimately they will turn to the God of Israel, which can only be accomplished by faith in the Messiah Jesus. Verse 22a points out that in spite of the numerical strength of the Jews, only the Remnant will turn to God. The Remnant will survive a decree of destruction that has been determined upon the whole earth (spoken of in verses 22b-23). The words used here are much the same as those found in Isaiah 28:22 where the decree of destruction is issued with the signing of the seven-year covenant that begins the Tribulation. Synthesizing these two Isaiah passages, the Remnant will survive the persecution of the Jews and the massive destruction of the earth during the Tribulation. Hence this passage (along with Isaiah 4:2; 37:31–32; Joel 2:32; and, Obadiah 17) refers to them as the *escaped* of Israel.

The Protection of the Remnant

Isaiah 41:8–16 records the protection of the Remnant by God's presence with them. This is a promise to preserve them in the midst of tremendous persecution during Satan's campaign to destroy the Jews.

The Provision for the Remnant

Isaiah 41:17–20 indicates that God will miraculously provide food and water, when tribulational Jews flee to the wilderness, just as He did in the wilderness of Sinai. These provisions will cause them to reconsider their relationship with God. In Isaiah 65:8–16, the prophet describes how God will supply the Faithful Remnant. Although Apostates will face suffering and death, He will divinely protect the Faithful Remnant and provide them with food and water. This will enable the Faithful Remnant to survive the Great Tribulation's persecutions and devastations.

Israel and the Second Coming

The Basis of Christ's Second Coming

No prophecies must be fulfilled prior to the Rapture of the Church, so it could occur at any moment. However, the Second Coming of Christ does have a major precondition that must be met before Christ will return to establish the Messianic Kingdom. This condition can be deduced from five passages of Scripture. The first passage is Leviticus 26:40–42, where Moses predicts that the Jews would be scattered all over the world, because of disobedience to God's revealed will. The New Testament indicates that this judgment resulted from the nation's rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus in Matthew 12. By verse 39, the worldwide dispersion is a fact. Indeed, Leviticus 26:1–39 has been fulfilled historically, but verses 40–42 are future. Verse 42 states that God has every intention of giving to Israel all the blessings and promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, especially as it pertains to the Promised Land. However, before they can begin to enjoy these blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant during the Messianic Kingdom, they must fulfill the condition of verse 40: . . . *they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers*. Notice that the word *iniquity* is singular and is specific. The fathers committed one specific iniquity that has been perpetuated through time. Israel must confess this before she can begin to enjoy all of the benefits of the Abrahamic Covenant.

The second passage is Jeremiah 3:11–18. In verses 14–18, Jeremiah describes the blessings that God has in store for Israel in the Messianic Kingdom. It will be a time of tremendous blessing and restoration for the Jewish people when their Messiah establishes the kingdom. However, all of these blessings are conditioned by verse 13, where they must acknowledge or confess one specific iniquity which they committed against Jehovah their God.

The third passage is in Zechariah. Chapters 12–14 contain one prophecy given by God. Chapter 13 speaks of the national cleansing of Israel from their sin. Chapter 14 describes the Second Coming of the Messiah (vv. 1–15) and the establishment of the kingdom (vv. 16–21). However, the cleansing of Israel, the Second Coming of Christ, and the Messianic Kingdom are all conditioned on Zechariah 12:10. Before Israel will receive the cleansing of her sin, and before Christ will return to establish His kingdom, Israel must first look *unto* the One whom they have pierced and must plead for His return. Once they do this, then, and only then, will they receive their cleansing and begin to enjoy the blessings of the Messianic Age.

The fourth passage is Hosea 5. The speaker throughout the chapter is God Himself. He is still speaking in verse 15:

I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me earnestly.

Certain logical features underlie the meaning of this verse. Could one return to a place without first leaving it? No. In this passage God states that He is going to return to His place, heaven. This clearly implies that God left heaven. This leaving of heaven occurred in the incarnation when God became man, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Then, one specific offense committed against Him caused Him to return to heaven at the ascension from the Mount of Olives. This verse states that He will not come back to the earth until they confess the offense (their rejection of His messiahship) that caused Him to leave.

Matthew 23, the fifth passage, contains Christ's denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees, who led the nation in rejecting His messiahship. He was still speaking to them in verses 37–39. Speaking to the Jewish leadership, Christ reiterated His original desire to gather them if they would only accept Him (v. 37). Because of their rejection of His messiahship, in place of being gathered they are going to be scattered. Their *house*, the Jewish

Temple, will be left *desolate* and will be destroyed with nothing remaining (v. 38). He then declares that they will not see Him again until they say, *Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord* (v. 39). This is a quotation of a messianic Psalm, Psalm 118:26.

Jesus will not come back to the earth until the Jews and the Jewish leaders ask Him to come back. Just as the Jewish leaders led the nation in rejecting the messiahship of Jesus, they must someday lead the nation to the acceptance of His messiahship. This, then, is the twofold basis of the Second Coming of Christ: Israel must confess her national sin and then plead for Messiah to return, to *mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son*. Until these two things happen, there will be no Second Coming.

Israel's National Regeneration and Romans 11:25–36

The Confession of Israel's National Sin

Hosea 6:1–3 states:

Come, and let us return unto Jehovah; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him. And let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah: his going forth is sure as the morning; and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth.

This is actually a continuation of Hosea 5.¹² It contains the acknowledgment of the sin demanded by 5:15. The Jewish leaders call upon the nation to repent and confess their national sin (vv. 1–2). Only then will God restore the physical blessings Israel once enjoyed (v. 3). Israel's leaders will finally realize why the Tribulation has fallen on them. Just as the Jewish leaders once led the nation to the rejection of the messiahship of Jesus,

¹² The chapter division is unfortunate, because it breaks the train of thought.

they will now lead the nation in accepting His messiahship by issuing Hosea 6:1–3’s call. Israel’s confession of national sin will last for two days as the entire nation becomes regenerated and saved. Isaiah 53:1–9 states the actual words of the confession. They will admit that the nation had looked upon Jesus as nothing more than another man, a criminal who had died for his own sins. However, they will recognize that He was no ordinary man, but the perfect Lamb of God, the Messiah Himself. Furthermore, it was not for His own sins that Messiah died, but for theirs, so that they need not be stricken for their sin. Thus, national regeneration will come through the national confession of Isaiah 53:1–9. The nation as a nation will be saved.

The Partial Hardening

The national confession will fulfill the prophecy of Romans 11:25–32. The explanatory *for* connects this verse with 11:24. Paul made a clear declaration of Israel’s final restoration (vv. 25–26a). He points out two limitations to Israel’s hardening: Israel was hardened only *in part* and only temporarily (v. 25). The hardening was partial, but never total, as 11:1–10 asserts. The fact that Jewish people do come to saving faith proves that the hardening was partial. In addition, Israel was hardened only temporarily, until *the fulness* of the Gentiles has come in.¹³ In other words, God has a set number of Gentiles that will come into the place of blessing, the Olive Tree (verses 16–24). After reaching that set number, then all Israel will be saved.

Acts 15:14 indicates that one of the purposes of the Church Age is to call out from among the Gentiles a people for His name. While there is a Jewish Remnant coming to faith in this age, another key purpose is to take out from among the Gentiles a people for His name. This calling out from among the Gentiles will continue until reaching *the fulness*, that set number of Gentiles. At that time, the Church will be complete and will be removed at the Rapture. Then God will deal with Israel as a

¹³ The word for *fulness* means “a full number” or “a complete number.”

nation again, rather than just with Jewish individuals. This national dealing will lead to all Israel being saved (v. 26a). When Paul stated *all Israel*, he meant all Jews living at that time, not all Jews of all time.

Israel's national salvation is not this passage's *mystery*, for the Old Testament revealed that truth. The mystery is that a partial, temporary hardening of Israel lasts until reaching a full number of Gentiles. The *Israel* here must refer to national Israel.¹⁴ No contextual basis exists to make this verse the sole exception, especially since the normal interpretation makes sense in context as a contrast to the *Gentiles* in the previous verse.

The Pleading for the Messiah to Return

The second requirement leading to the Second Coming is Israel's pleading for the Messiah to return and save them from the world armies intent on destroying them. This pleading is the subject of much revelation. For example, Zechariah 12:10–13:1 indicates that beginning with confession of the national sin, Israel will plead for His return to save them from the troubles described in the preceding context. They plead for the one *whom they have pierced* as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Zechariah 13:7–9 shows that the Remnant comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus the Messiah via the fires of the Tribulation. Verse seven explains why the events of the Tribulation will fall on Israel: God's Shepherd, the Messiah, was smitten, and so His sheep, Israel, were scattered throughout the world. Toward the latter end of the dispersion will come the Great Tribulation through which two-thirds of the Jewish population will be killed (v. 8). By means of the national confession of their sin, the remaining third will be purified (v. 9). God will then answer their

¹⁴ Each of the other ten uses of *Israel* since chapter 9 have this meaning.

pleading for Him to come to save them. They will once again be His people, and He will be their God.¹⁵

In conclusion, Israel as a nation will be regenerated and saved after two days of national confession of sin. On the third day they will plead for Christ's Second Coming, followed by His coming.

The Remnant of Israel

According to Romans 11:25–27, all Israel will be saved. According to Isaiah 10:20–23, only the Remnant will be saved. This is not a contradiction if understood in the context of Israel's national salvation. Zechariah 13:8–9 points out that two-thirds of the Jewish population will be destroyed during the Tribulation. Only the Remnant will survive, the *escaped* of Isaiah 4:2; 10:20; 37:31–32; Joel 2:32; and Obadiah 17. The remaining one-third become believers, so at that point *all Israel* and the *remnant of Israel* become one and the same, as Micah 2:12–13 shows.

*I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee;
I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.*

The *all of thee* and *the remnant of Israel* become identical, for with Israel's national salvation the whole nation joins the Remnant (v. 12). Then, Messiah returns to rescue them (v. 13).

The Judgment of the Gentiles

Though multitudes of Gentiles will be killed throughout the course of the Tribulation and Gentile armies will be slaughtered in the Armageddon campaign, many will survive. Following the Second Coming, all these will now be gathered together for a judgment described in two passages of Scripture.

The first passage is Joel 3:1–3. The timing of this judgment is in conjunction with the restoration of Israel (v. 1). All the Gentiles will be gathered into the Valley of Jehoshaphat for the judgment (v. 2a). A judgment of this nature, resulting in a destiny

¹⁵ Cf. Joel 2:28–32; Isaiah 64:1–12; Psalm 79:1–13; and Psalm 80:1–19.

of eternal life or eternal hell, cannot be a national judgment, but individual. The word rendered *nations* also means “Gentiles,” and this is the way it should be translated. The grounds for this judgment will be anti-Semitism or pro-Semitism (vv. 2b-3). Their treatment of the Jews during the Great Tribulation will be the basis of the judgment for all these Gentiles. The sins committed against Israel listed in this indictment are: first, scattering the Jews (in the middle of the Tribulation); second, parting the land (Campaign of Armageddon); and, third, selling the Jews into slavery (Zechariah 12:1–2). He will judge each Gentile living at that time on the basis of his participation or non-participation in these deeds.

The second passage, Matthew 25:31–46, gives the results of this judgment. Verses 31–33 identify the Judge, the judgment, and those judged. The Judge (v. 31) will be Jesus the Messiah, who will sit on a throne encompassed by His glory in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. All the Gentiles still living will be gathered before Him for the judgment (v. 32).¹⁶

This judgment will divide all the Gentiles into two camps: the pro-Semitic *sheep* and the anti-Semitic *goats* (v. 33). Verses 34–40 concern the pro-Semitic sheep. The pro-Semites are those who help Christ’s *brethren*, the Jews, during the Great Tribulation, a time of intense danger. Only believers in the messiahship of Jesus will take such risks at the end of the Tribulation. These believing Gentiles will often provide Jews who flee into the wilderness with food, clothing and shelter. They will identify themselves with the Jews by visiting them in prison and will perform other acts of kindness for them. After the judgment, they will enter the Messianic Kingdom and will populate its Gentile nations.

¹⁶ Again, the word translated *nations* is also the common word for “Gentiles.” The latter is the way it should be taken, for this is an individual judgment on the basis of anti-Semitism or pro-Semitism.

Verses 41–45 discuss the anti-Semitic *goats*. These anti-Semites who aid the Antichrist in his program of destroying Jews will be killed and sent to hell. Consequently, they will lose out on both life and millennial blessing. The basis of the judgment will be anti-Semitism or pro-Semitism. This raises a question when compared with 25:46:

And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.

The goats will be condemned to eternal punishment, but the sheep will both enter the kingdom (v. 34) and inherit eternal life.

Eternal salvation is always by grace through faith, totally apart from works. The sheep have justification through faith alone in Christ alone. However, during the Great Tribulation, unbelievers will not violate the Antichrist's laws to aid Jews. The *sheep's* pro-Semitic acts will result from their saved state. *Goats* will demonstrate their unbelief by their anti-Semitic acts.¹⁷

The Resurrection of the Old Testament Saints

The Rapture will remove only the Church saints prior to the Great Tribulation. After the Second Coming, Old Testament saints will be resurrected. Two Old Testament passages state this: Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2. This resurrection enables God to fulfill the previously unfulfilled covenantal promises to them.¹⁸

¹⁷ [Editor's note: cf. Zane C. Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse: A Study on Eternal Rewards*, 2d ed. (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1987), 102–4, for clarification of the Free Grace Gospel, rewards, and eschatology here. The key phrase in Matthew 24:34 is that the sheep inherit the kingdom. This does not refer to entering the kingdom, but to inheritance of reward. They enter through faith alone in Christ alone, but they inherit reward through serving Him. After the Great Tribulation's decimation of the human race, the only believers who will be alive for this judgment will be rewardable ones. At no other time in history would all unrewardable Gentiles be unbelieving Gentiles or *goats*.]

¹⁸ Cf. Acts 26:6–8. Paul identifies the resurrection of the dead as the promise that God made to the fathers. Specifically, if God does not raise Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob from the dead, how could He give **them** and their seed the land of Israel forever?

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