

The UNION

Get Ready to Meet the King!

God Calls His Church to
Truth, Faith, and Holiness

2016
Edition

Joan H. Richardson

The UNION

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by Joan H. Richardson

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The UNION

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PART IV

G-D OF HIS WORD

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones ... and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus sayeth the Lord GOD unto these bones; I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then he said unto me, prophesy to the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.

Therefore prophesy and say unto them, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land:

... And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side and bring them into their own land:

(Ezekiel 37:1-14a; 37: 21)

CHAPTER 19

Abram, Messenger of Grace

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: And he was called the Friend of God. (James 2:20-23)

Where did James get a thought like that? Did Paul say the same thing differently? The idea is in the Book of Beginnings:

“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”
(Genesis 22:18 NKJV) –YHWH, speaking to Abraham

Abram's Faith

When the LORD called him out of Haran, He told Abram to leave his kindred and his home and go to a land He would show him. Lot, his deceased brother's son, went with him and Sarai, his wife. God promised to bless them who'd bless him and curse them who'd curse him, and that in him, all families on the earth would be blessed. He was seventy-five.

First, Abram came to Shechem where God appeared to him, showing him the land he had given him; he built an altar to Him there. (Gen. 12:7) Then he moved, pitching his tent east of Bethel and built a second altar, calling on His name. In time, Abram went south; when famine struck, he journeyed farther south to Egypt. Though he made some bad choices in Egypt, God still blessed him until Pharaoh sent him home. [See Gen. 12:10-20] Returning to Shechem, he called on the name of the LORD again.

Both Lot and Abram had been made rich in Egypt with herds and flocks. Now their herdsmen were contending because there was not enough land for them all. So he offered Lot his choice

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of land, leaving Abram in the desert areas where God was with him. As time passed, the kings in the region went to war, four against five, including the king of Sodom, one of the five defeated kings. In the midst of battles, Lot was captured, but Abram heard about it, marshaled three hundred eighteen trained men, and raided the armies of the four victors. He triumphed in the war and set Lot free. To show his gratitude, in the Valley of Kings, Abram gave a tenth of the spoils to the priest of God Most High, Salem's king, Melchizedek:

After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house *is* this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the LORD *came* unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. (Genesis 15:1-6)

According to the Holy Spirit in Jacob [James], Abraham's works completed his faith, fulfilling the imputation that counted his faith as righteousness. Without works, his faith would have died; however, he activated his faith by his deeds, perfecting it by making it a living faith. Today the just live by the same faith.

Abram's Covering

Then He said to him, "I *am* the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." And he said, "Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?" So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other;

Abram, Messenger of Grace

but he did not cut the birds in two. And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. (Genesis 15:7-11 NKJV)

Abram had believed God would give him an heir, and YHWH had promised him land for them, but he wanted to know how he could be *certain* of the *promise*. He had heard the LORD and had seen the land, but how could he *be sure* the land he saw would be his? Abram should have believed God who had promised it to him. But he questioned the promise. Not discussing it further, the LORD commanded him to bring sacrifices, for *without shed-ding of blood, there is no forgiveness*. (See *Heb. 9:22b NIV; Lev. 17:11*) When vultures came after them, Abram chased them off.

The LORD had promised him innumerable descendants and had chosen him to believe in the greatest promise that men and angels had witnessed. His faith, which at first had responded to the promise for descendants, was tested by the next words God spoke, granting him land. First, however, he'd learn the lessons we all must learn: the virtue of faith in God and the danger of unbelief.

Terrified!

On the night of the sacrifices, God circumcised Abram's heart with fear that painfully exposed his sin, separating the flesh from the spirit. In his horror, Abram's heart was changed: his terror turned to dread; remorse became repentance. God instilled His fear in Abram's heart to prepare him for the confirmation of his faith: the necessary discipline of obedience. Much later, His prophets obeyed God by the same fear and by the same faith.

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. (Genesis 15:12)

As Abram slept, he woke to the reality of his sin, and in his horror, he agonized in the dark. His own unbelief appalled him, but God would console him by grace, accepting his sacrifices, and making Abram an example for generations: when we doubt God, we sin by unbelief. Nobody can enter the kingdom, not

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even the father of our faith, Abraham, apart from faith in the words of God and the acceptable blood sacrifice for our sins.

And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance, And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. (Genesis 15:13-16)

As God had foretold, the consequences of Abram's unbelief would come upon his descendants: More than a century later, his great-grandsons refused to believe their brother's dreams. In envy, they rose against Joseph and sold him into slavery. But his dreams came to pass when his family entered Egypt to escape the famine. Falling on their faces before their brother who ruled beside Pharaoh, they saw his prophecies fulfilled. The Egyptians would make slaves of their Hebrew descendants, as the LORD had prophesied to Abram after he doubted Him. God sent his descendants into Egypt only to become slaves for four hundred years. That was the long-range consequence of his own unbelief.

The popular teaching is that by the sacrifices and ceremony, God simply cut a covenant for the land, according to the customs of the heathens; however, God doesn't follow pagan rituals but changes pagan hearts to follow Him. Make no mistake, He ordered blood sacrifices to cover Abram's sin; thus, God cut a blood covenant prophetically in grace for the father of our faith.

And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.
(Genesis 15:17)

Later that night as he dreamed, Abram saw a vision: a smoking furnace and a burning torch passed between the sacrifices, and the presence of God moved through the midst of them. The destiny of unbelief is fearful—a furnace that burns forever; but the Word is the light of God that leads believers into everlasting

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life. The choices were before Abram: faith or unbelief, life or death, truth or deceit, light or darkness; just as they are before us. These opposing forces have tested men's souls since Eden.

So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:49-50)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)

When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. (Revelation 9:2 NIV)

“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (John 3:19 NKJV)

A Comparison

When Zechariah, the husband of Mary's cousin Elizabeth, saw the angel of the LORD, he appeared at the right side of the altar of incense in the sanctuary. Gabriel prophesied he would beget a son by his elderly wife. But he replied like Abram:

“How can I know this?” Zechariah asked the angel. “For I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years.”

The angel answered him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and tell you this good news. Now listen! You will become silent and unable to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time.” (Luke 1:18-20 HCSB)

Zechariah's unbelief did not deter the faithfulness of God or thwart the plans His messenger had announced. Though we must face the consequences of our unfaithfulness, the gifts and calling of God depend on His faithfulness, not ours. He is the Sovereign One before whom we must bow.

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Six months later, a young virgin in Nazareth was troubled by a similar greeting from Gabriel: “*Rejoice, favored woman! The Lord is with you!*” (See Lk. 1:28 HCSB) After he announced the plan of God, she asked, “How can this be, since I haven’t been intimate with a man?” (See Lk. 1:34 HCSB) Mary was asking how this would happen. She had not expressed doubt but wonder and curiosity. The angel explained, the conception would occur by the Holy Spirit, to which she replied, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word (Lk. 1:38)*—an expression of humility and faith. (See Lk. 1:26-38)

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God. And whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

(1 John 3:21-22)

After Abram gave a tithe of his war spoils to Melchizedek, the Word of God came to him in a vision, promising him as many descendants as the incalculable stars in the sky. And he believed in God. Then He promised him the land for his seed, but he questioned Him. After he gave the sacrifices, the LORD prophesied the consequences of his doubt, and then expanded the covenant and secured even greater blessings for his seed:

In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites. (Genesis 15:18-21)

The True Circumcision

YHWH had chosen Abram as a vessel of grace; he learned about His mercy in the sacrifices that had covered his sin. In years to come, the fear that followed Abram’s doubt would work for his benefit. In reflections of his life, Abraham must have seen that God had given him faith to fear Him that would prompt his obedience on the day when far more would be required.

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When he was ninety-nine, God ordained circumcision for a token of their covenant. He changed his name to *Abraham* and said: *for a father of many nations have I made thee.* (*Gen. 17:5b*) At that time, Ishmael, Abram's son by Hagar the bondservant, along with the other slaves in his household, was circumcised at thirteen years old. From then on, circumcision was made a sign for Abraham's progeny—the token of the covenant between God and him when YHWH exposed his heart and transformed his life.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. ... This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

(Genesis 17:7-8, 10-11) [A *token* is a physical sign of an abstract or spiritual reality.]

And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. (Genesis 17:19)

God had made an unbreakable covenant; but more than six hundred years passed till He returned Abram's descendants to the land. In the desert east of the Jordan River, the LORD gave His people the Law through Moses. Though God was a faithful Husband, Israel was an unfaithful wife, breaking that covenant many times. Moses had prophesied a new covenant that would come by another Prophet, and it would replace the one Israel could not keep:

"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—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My

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covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them,” says the LORD. (Jeremiah 31:31-32 NKJV) – The Mosaic covenant ended with the arrival of the new covenant.

After making a covenant of salt with King David, in the last days, God would send the Prophet with the life-giving covenant:

“Should you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt? (2 Chronicles 13:5 NKJV)

Circumcision depicted the spiritual change that had occurred in Abraham’s heart and is the sign of the covenant God made with him. The most important part of that covenant was not the outward token but his inward change of heart that motivated his faithfulness to obey God. Abram first activated his faith by leaving Haran in obedience to the command. Afterward, Lot and Abram parted company to keep peace. At that time, God promised Abram innumerable sons, like the dust of the earth, and all the land within eyesight. And just about all he saw was dust!

After the war between the kings, by his faith, he gave a tenth of his war spoils to Melchizedek. (See Gen. 14:17-20) Then Abram reminded(?) God that he was still without a son. God reassured him of His promise to him for descendants. At that time, Abram believed in God, and his faith was counted for righteousness even before it was perfected. (See Gen. 15:5-6; Jas. 2:21-23). By honoring the Priest of God with a tithe, Abram evoked a great response!

Later he begat Isaac with Sarah, even in their old age, acting on their faith in the promise of God. Years afterward, Abraham perfected his earlier faith, obeying the command to offer his *only son, Isaac* on the altar where he secured his imputed righteousness. *Fearful* to disobey, Abraham affirmed his *faith*, acting on the command God had given while knowing that more sons than he could fathom would come from his one promised son, Isaac. As they neared the mountaintop, Isaac and he approached the altar of sacrifice...

And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham

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said, my son, God himself will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: (Genesis 22:7-8a NIV)

God would provide the lamb who would endure the fire, but a ram in the thicket became the substitute for Isaac that day. [The ram, an adult male sheep, is unlike a lamb, its young virgin offspring.] Abraham's prophecy required a lamb, not a ram, as the burnt sacrifice; but the prophet's words would not fail. [Many manuscripts of the Masoretic Text, Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, and Syriac read, *Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns*. The early manuscripts all have, *Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram*.]

Years before, the terror of God had drawn him close to Him. Now by the same fear, he believed and shunned disobedience. He took the first sacrificial steps to obey God: doing what *he did not want to do*, he laid the wood on Isaac and took the tools for the sacrifice into his own hands. The command to offer his son was dreadful, but Abraham had not forgotten the terror of God; thus he died to his own will and obeyed the command; perfecting his faith.

By now, Abraham knew that God would even raise the dead to keep His Word, but God honored him because he feared Him: *And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.* (Gen. 22:11-12) The fear of God prompts us to obey Him when we dread the ramifications of our obedience. The fear of God is the mystery of the martyrs and the prophets.

Why Abram?

By sovereign grace, God made Abraham a father of many—innumerable as stars of the sky or sand of the sea, promising blessings to all nations by his seed. He gave a homeland for his natural descendants since the God of Israel is always faithful to keep His Word, providing for His promises, even if we are not faithful. When in the weakness of sinful flesh, the Law failed to make Israel holy, the Son of God came as a Jew through the seed of David to redeem mankind by His Sacrifice.

The God of His Word

When the Word of the LORD came the fourth time, Abram believed in God; even when his body was *as good as dead* and Sarai's, barren and aged, he believed. They both hoped against hope, speaking promises, calling each other by name: *Abraham!* or "Father of Many!" and *Sarah!* or, "Princess!" Thus they encouraged each other, keeping the flame of their love alive as time passed.

Despite the unalterable condition of their flesh, they grew in faith, believing that God was able to do what He had promised. Before the Law of Moses, He had endowed grace for Abraham and Sarah to beget a son, electing both the man and his wife with a most important role in the destiny of Israel:

Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. (Hebrews 11:11)

And behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."
(Genesis 15:4 NKJV; cf. 2 Sam 7:2)

The promises were to Isaac, conceived by promise, through faith and not his parents' natural strength. In Eden, God had said a man would be joined to his wife to become *one flesh*; thus, the promise through Abraham's *body* would come to Sarah whose holy union with her husband completed his own body.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. (Ephesians 5:31; also, Genesis 2:24)

Abraham's descendants experienced the consequences of unbelief, but because their forefather had feared God, He would not destroy them. Why did the Hebrews suffer by Abram's doubt? As his seed, they too doubted and suffered discipline for their own unbelief, but they also reaped the blessings of his faith.

We remember the faith and perseverance of Job; but God didn't promise the lineage of the Redeemer through him though Job believed he would see his Redeemer after death. He had

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seven sons and three daughters—twice! Perfect numbers, too—yet God did not give the promise to Job. Instead, He made the promise for the vast inheritance of children to an old, barren couple who would patiently wait for twenty-five years until its fulfillment by the birth of their only son.

He did this to make His power and faithfulness known, revealing the light of His truth to Abraham more completely as the years passed. With the eyes of his heart enlightened, he *endured, as seeing Him who is invisible*. (See Heb. 11:27)

About Doubt?

Could the weakness of Abram's flesh or the barrenness of Sarah's womb have nullified the promise of God? Of course not, but they were chosen to glorify God in their weaknesses. His faithfulness is on display in Israel, proving to the world that He alone is God. Abraham obeyed YHWH, perfecting His faith, doing his part for the blessings of the covenant. He could look back to see miracles following him; God had taken him by the hand out of Babylon to fulfill His promises for His name's sake.

Covenants require faithfulness on both parts. However when Israel, in the weakness of their flesh, broke the covenant, another covenant would rescue them, and a remnant would be saved for the sake of the promises to Abraham, Jacob's sons, and David. Their unfaithfulness cannot thwart the faithfulness of God.

The same is true for us. He will keep those among us who keep the covenant with Him by walking in the Spirit, not the flesh. But if we spurn Him, He will judge us; *if we deny Him, He will deny us*; nevertheless, we can alter His judgments by repentance. He is faithful to do His part as a Husband to those of the faith of Abraham, even to true Israel. He never destroys His people without a warning but promises a remnant the blessing.

The angel Gabriel made Zacharias silent until the birth of his promised son John, yet God remained faithful to His words, which He fulfilled in their proper time. An unrepentant man proves his unbelief and brings condemnation on himself, but the fear of God tests, proves, and perfects our faith.

It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with

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him: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us: If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.
(2 Timothy 2:11-13)

God judges unbelief: Abraham's descendants suffered for unbelief, which led to their bondage in Egypt. Had Abram not doubted God, his progeny might have avoided their own unbelief and four hundred years of slavery. God shows Himself sovereign and true. He is faithful to His chosen and foreknown ones, but unbelievers and sinners have no part in His kingdom. Keeping faith to the end, we inherit everlasting life, loving one another.

Those whose lives were disclosed by the Bible are examples for us to learn by. Their steps and their missteps provide us with treasures of understanding and wisdom. If we will believe His words, then the Father will liberate and unify us by His truth.

God has been preparing a family of His own to enjoy His wisdom and love forever. Even in these days of compromise and duplicity, He calls us out, giving us the power to freely choose obedience and resist rebellion. Will we love His Word that leads to life or sin that leads to death? Will we yield to the Spirit and live or to the flesh and die? Apart from Him, we can do nothing. His kingdom is already here, guaranteeing the establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth when Messiah returns to reign.

I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' (Acts 26:17-18 NIV) – Jesus' words to him, as Paul described his conversion to King Agrippa

CHAPTER 20

The Chosen Nation

For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. (Isaiah 48:9-10)

God chose Abram in Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans. He called him out of Ur and directed his steps as he journeyed, heading northwest with his family. Abram, his father, sisters, and brother settled in a city called Haran [also the name of his brother who died in Ur]. Finally, God separated him from his family, calling him to an unknown place. He and his wife Sarai left everyone but a nephew and trekked to Canaan.

Years later, God changed His name and made Abraham the father of all who believe and obey Him. Like him, first we trust in God, next we obey; then our journey begins. As Abraham has done, each of us will apprehend his own destiny one step at a time.

The Everlasting Covenant

Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, *and* the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts *is* his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, *then* the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 31:35-37)

While it is true that *the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein* (Ps. 24:1), the whole world belongs to God, and He gives it to whomever He chooses, but one area was especially close to His heart when He gave it to Abraham and his descendants forever. For His chosen

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people, our Lord selected a particular origin as His own. The land of God, promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, stretches *from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates.* (See Gen. 15:18)

His promises are good and trustworthy; therefore, the whole land is theirs to take though they have only realized a small part of its vastness. Many of their ancestors had lacked the courage and faith to slay the giants they'd seen across the Jordan. They never made it to the other side but were destroyed in the desert for their unbelief. The next generation gained the ground by crossing the river and winning victories in their wars, believing the promises and receiving them.

In 1947, Jews began returning to their land en masse after nearly two thousand years of disbursement. More than three millennia earlier, Israel had faced the challenge that remains: there were giants in the land. But His promises are theirs to gain as they believe His words, and He has cornered them to believe His every word as it is written.

God warns the world with history: every time the chosen nation spurned Him by unbelief, the LORD displayed His fierce anger against them. Israel is His to judge or bless, but now the time of Jacob's trouble (See Jer. 30:7) has concluded while the nations have divided the land and provoked the wrath of God.

For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal; yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.
(Zechariah 14:2-5) [An earthquake signals His return.]

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The Pupil of His Eye

Does no one fear Him? The time of restoration will bless the chosen remnant; He will not restrain His fury against their enemies forever. Whoever boasts against the Jews will know the wrath of God within themselves, their families, their lands, and their cultures; the curse on them is evident to the whole world.

The Word exhorts us to embrace Israel and protect their nation. God promised their land and much more to Jacob—now who is on the Lord’s side? We who believe His words are like family to Israel, grafted in among them as spiritually chosen, having the faith Abraham had in the Sacrifice God provided. Are we believers who are justified by works and not by faith only, or is our faith dead? (See Jas. 2; then Rom. 6 and 8.)

For thus says the LORD of hosts, “After glory He has sent Me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.
(Zechariah 2:8 NASB)

The expression, “the apple of his eye” is a frequently quoted idiom. In the Bible, it’s associated with Israel, reminding us that God is faithful to His beloved nation. Because Israel is dear to Him, God is her defense, true and faithful to His Word.

The word for “apple” can also be translated, “pupil.” The Hebrew word for pupil was a metaphor: the eye’s pupil allows light to enter, receiving it through the optic nerve to the brain where we “see” the image. Without the pupil, there is no vision, just blindness. The LORD calls Israel the pupil of His eye since His light entered His body on earth through His chosen ones. Since God appointed Israel to give light to our souls, we have been able to learn the secrets of His spiritual words.

Jacob believed God, refusing to release the man he wrestled until winning the match. The LORD named him Israel because he dared to persevere, overcoming through the pain to gain the blessing. At the time, Jacob had fathered eleven sons who’d beget the descendants of the nation. Before his death, he would bestow blessings on sons and grandsons as the patriarch leaned on his staff, still crippled by the wound the man of God had inflicted. (See Gen. 32:22-33:5)

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Centuries later, the light of moral justice arrived when God called Moses to deliver His people from slavery in Egypt, giving them His commandments in the wilderness. His light entered the world by the chosen deliverer when God spoke to him as a man speaks to his friend face-to-face. (from Ex. 33:11)

More than fourteen hundred years later, Israel offered the light of righteousness to the nations of the world when a young Jewish virgin brought forth the Son of God. The cross and empty tomb displayed His love for mankind, fulfilling the prophecies.

God selected the nation Israel as the pupil of His eye even before the hands of Jewish scribes wrote the Scriptures that are preserved to this day. Drawn from the Law and the Prophets, the writings of Jewish apostles enlightened the nations. Now the true light is the Word, *Immanuel*, Israel's Savior-Messiah.

These events came as the result of the faith of an old married couple who believed God, receiving words of truth from the God of impossible things. After the miraculous birth of their only son, their faith in the invisible One enlightened future generations.

We learn the truth about God through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, David, Josiah, Joel, Amos, Zechariah, Malachi, Jonah, the apostles—Paul, Mark, Matthew, James, John, Peter and many others—all Israelites, all Jews. Those who join them from the nations believe in the God of Israel, made Jews by faith in the same God. [The apostle Paul tells us that we who have left our uncleanness behind us are no longer gentiles but Jews, living by faith in the promised Son of God. Ruth, the Moabite wife of Boaz, became a Jew by faith in the Hebrew Scriptures just as we've been grafted in today.]

Soon YHWH will divide the Mount of Olives as He comes to judge the nations that oppose Israel. He will shake the earth, and exalt His throne in Jerusalem. Israel is the unique nation, signifying to the world that the God of the Jews alone is God over all: He is identified as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom He renamed Israel. And yes, the God of Israel has a Son! [Is. 9:6]

Faith in His Son is critical to salvation. *Immanuel* means, "God with us." Since YHWH alone saves, and *Yeshua* means

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“YHWH saves,” it’s proper to say, “YHWH is with us” in Yeshua for YHWH is in His Son *Yeshua*, which is how His Son is like His eternal Father. Each time Jesus’ name is used as a curse or spoken in vain, men sin against the holy name, YHWH, whose name is in His name.

Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign;
Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and
shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

Israel the Olive Tree

The Christian church doesn’t accurately represent the Word that calls the congregation of believers indivisibly one new man—Jews and gentiles—the united, functioning body of Jesus Christ. In the early years, when gentiles first became believers, things were different than now: they joined their Jewish brothers and mentors in small fellowships to worship on fields, in homes, or in synagogues; they even gathered in caves for safety.

Confusion about Jewish laws caused problems at first, but the apostles resolved those issues by teaching the congregations the new covenant provisions: gentiles had become sons of Abraham through faith in Yeshua. The grace of the atonement had arrived, and the Holy Spirit had been poured out to draw all believers into the union of God. Holiness through sanctification, spiritual separation by the Holy Spirit, would be the sign of their Jewish heritage, rather than ordinances and rules that couldn’t make them holy but had only separated them from the nations.

While those who left gentile beginnings are not Abraham’s natural children, God loves all believers the same because we are all His in the union of His family by our kindred faith. (*“the flesh profits nothing”*— *Yeshua*) We have the same spiritual promises and blessings as the natural children of faith; however, his spiritual sons, not born of the same flesh but of the same Spirit, don’t share the physical land that God promised Abram’s natural descendants, but the eternal city that Abraham foresaw also belongs to us.

The temporal precedes the eternal. By the physical token of circumcision, the physical descendants were given the physical land of Israel, which prefigures the eternal kingdom. It is the

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token of the promise to come. Abraham's spiritual descendants, whether Jews or gentiles, will inhabit the everlasting kingdom and fill its city, the New Jerusalem.

Abraham and the prophets after him foresaw the eternal city, built with spiritual gems, closely fitted together. Before he could accept his place in the Spirit, he walked the physical land in obedience to God. He learned that first the corruptible benefits come; later on, incorruptible, everlasting benefits are established. (Re: 1 Cor. 15:39-57) He saw the dust before he saw the heavens.

Today Abraham longs for his natural children to recognize the promised Son, miraculously begotten by God. When Jews receive His Son, Abraham shares their joy. By choosing life in the Savior, they are returning to their God. The Father of all who believe will rush to greet them with His arms wide open. In that great welcome is the glorious beauty and joy of our salvation.

Like Jacob, Israel has struggled to survive, often groaning in pain from his brokenness, yet still he hopes in God against all odds. He is reminded of his past chastisements but sees the promised land and is caught between the two until he receives the unseen by faith. In his weakness, God is always his strength.

Now YHWH stands with Israel to heal him with compassion. He who called Israel out of Jacob turned the heart of Jacob back to Israel, returning him to the land from the nations.

Finally, Judah's Scepter will come and our Savior will heal their memories of Babylon forever. Therefore we pray for the peace of Jerusalem until the Messiah supernaturally comes to destroy their enemies, establish His government, and reign over the earth from Jerusalem!

For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.

Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and

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the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as aforesaid, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.

(Jeremiah 30:17-20)

Their time of testing in the desert proved the Hebrews were slaves to their flesh, but God disciplined them to spare a remnant. He cultivated that wild olive tree, clipping back its branches to shape them in conformity to His will as the fear of God restrained their wild behavior. The prophets boldly announced the judgments of God; they still rebelled. Then He was wrathful against them, destroying many; yet for the sake of His promises, He saved a remnant to regain the land. By them, He reminds us He is Sovereign; no one prevents the fulfillment of His words, and He will instill His fear in the hearts of men everywhere:

Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul. (Jeremiah 32:37-41)

Today God is again electing Jews for salvation as the time for the gentiles closes. Though the nations have believed in great numbers, the sun is setting as its light rises on Israel. He spoke to the gentiles, and now His chosen people, the sons of Jacob, are finding it increasingly difficult to resist the counsel of God.

For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election,

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they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

(Romans 11:27-32)

Israel is our object lesson: we must not draw back. God has no pleasure in us who cower from gaining His promises. He called and equipped us to win His holiness by faith in Him, and we must overcome the giants that challenge us. Losing is not an option; we must defeat everything that rises against the Word of God. Jesus Christ is our only hope: those who cower in unbelief are destroyed.

So What's Kosher?

One day, Yeshua approached a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. In moments, He removed the wall of separation that had divided people for centuries when He took a cup of water from her hand. The Prince of Peace was introducing a new covenant, eliminating gender, racial, cultural, and class divisions. After His resurrection, He sent Peter into a gentile home to share the good news of salvation; soon others delivered the message.

By faith, Peter had unlocked the kingdom gates to the gentile world, marking a turning point in the ethnic and cultural heritage of believing congregations. Later, Paul disclosed the mystery, kept secret for ages: Jews would win the gentiles to salvation by preaching the gospel. In response, gentiles would win the Jews by provoking them to envy through a personal relationship with the Spirit, the presence of Christ in us—our shining glory.

Soon the spirit of grace and supplication will be showered from heaven for the land to be healed and the people, forgiven. No longer do genealogies affect our relationship with God since the two, Jews and gentiles, are one union in the Spirit of our Lord; yet the promises are for the descendants of Jacob.

The LORD had not commanded Abraham to abstain from any food. Coming from Ur, he had no idea food could be *unclean* to eat; God reckoned his faith to him as righteousness before

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dietary laws. Abraham's diet had been common to the descendants of Noah: *And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, ... Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. (Gen. 9:1a, 3)*

When Israel's sons sinned in the wilderness, God destroyed all but their children. He would have made descendants through Moses, but the prophet implored God on behalf of those He'd rescued from Egypt. Moses prayed that God would preserve His people or the nations would deride Him as unfaithful. He granted Moses' request, sparing the children but added regulations, including ordinances, to separate them from the sins of the nations. His dietary restrictions came by Moses in the desert after the commandments. These disciplines prepared them for an everlasting covenant with better promises that would supersede ceremonies and rules (kept by the flesh), for the heart of the law is love.

Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
(Galatians 3:23-29 NIV)

A new covenant would come through the greater Prophet, first foreseen by Job; then by Abraham and Isaac, by Jacob who bestowed the scepter to Judah; Moses knew of Him; Isaiah expounded on His sacrifice; David foretold His death. Other prophets declared that a greater covenant lay ahead, but Israel rejected their words when God sent His Son in the common flesh of His own people. Their leaders had Him put to death, but He rose to life again and ascended to the right hand of His Father.

And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of

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the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

(Mark 8:31-32)

The physical seed, the Messiah, was of their own flesh, and the promised land would belong to the remnant of their flesh. The God of Israel is the God of His Word. His enemy is the false god who deceives men to destroy them, but the true God is trustworthy and faithful to defend His own with His mighty arm.

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

(John 14:23)

We who belong to Yeshua don't have laws that separate us from others, but we've entered the faith that Abraham had before the regulations. Now the righteousness of God sanctifies us as we yield to His Spirit, and we are all Jews only as we live by our faith in the Jewish Savior. Through our active, living faith, we are Abraham's children; therefore, we will gain the everlasting promises as joint heirs with his seed, Yeshua, and we are all one.

We are free to eat what's set before us or to abstain: *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* (Rom. 14:17) The Jew is free, if he chooses, to be as a Jew in the presence of Jews, or as a gentile in the presence of gentles. He is free to choose while thoughtful of others. The Jew who trusts in Yeshua is not under ordinances or rules, required of him before he was set free, but he must stay free, realizing his liberty was purchased on the cross.

Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

(Romans 3:29-30 NIV)

Athletes exercise by adding weights of resistance. After working out, they're ready to compete; then they remove the weights, setting aside every encumbrance. The ordinances and

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rules are like weights of resistance: when the Jew believes, the weights are removed, and he can excel in true righteousness. He was trained, disciplined well; now he is free to cast off those weights and finish the race.

The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven. As *is* the earthy, so *are* they also that *are* earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (1 Corinthians 15:47-49)

The Eternal One

Which is greater, the original or its copy? The temple and its altar existed in heaven before the Jewish nation was formed on earth. Centuries after their formation, God commanded them to make copies of the heavenly things and establish visuals of the invisible things, using physical elements from the earth; but the temple in heaven was not Jewish—heaven came first.

When the Word of God was made flesh by David's seed, He was named Yeshua to become the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Now the twelve tribes of Israel are memorialized as twelve gates of the New Jerusalem, and its twelve foundations are named as the Jewish apostles. In the eternal city, we are one body by faith in the truth, one new Mankind, living in harmony as the whole body was created to do. And the Lion of Judah is our King.

The invisible promises were fulfilled in the visible world, but earthly realities are temporal tokens of their eternal counterparts. Melchizedek had been King of Salem long before Abram was born, and the Word of God—the Seed—was in His bosom from eternity before it was made flesh. The visible land of Israel and its capital city, Jerusalem, are precedents of unseen promises to Abram who believed God and left Haran for Canaan hundreds of years before their realization.

From an earthly perspective, the land signifies the invisible reality, like a promise or guarantee of things to come. Its capital city's counterpart is the eternal city in heaven, not built by human hands. In other words, the fulfilled promises are visible to us now, and their visible realities guarantee the arrival of the

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invisible, everlasting things to come. At the same time, the invisible Holy Spirit guarantees the transformation of the visible body into bodies like Jesus' own glorious body, and the Bible guarantees the passing away and a new creation from the visible heavens and earth. He gives us faith to apprehend the invisible kingdom. (*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*) (2 Cor. 3:7)

Abraham was not a Jew but a Semite, the grandfather of Jacob who blessed twelve sons by faith. He blessed his son Judah with an inheritance, the right to reign—the scepter. One day the Son of David, the Lion of Judah, will sit in Jerusalem as King of kings. The city of the promise, gained by faith in Him, is New Jerusalem where He will hand over His kingdom to His Father YHWH forever. (See Jn. 10:29-30; 1 Cor. 15:24-25)

We who live by faith share His victories today, and we will reign in Him forever because His Spirit reigns over us. Strangers to this world, we seek the union of the true congregation, the restoration of the Israel of God. Transformed by the vicarious death and resurrection of His body, we were *sown in corruption*, but will be *raised in incorruption*. (1 Cor. 15:42b) All that is corruptible will pass away, but the incorruptible will replace it.

The Return

It was impossible for God to break His covenant with Abram whose seed would bless all nations, and it is impossible for Him to break His everlasting promise, giving the land of Philistines to Abram and his progeny. Can replacement theologians maintain their efforts to teach misleading ideas in view of the beautiful land of Israel?

Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By Myself I have sworn," this is the LORD's declaration: "Because you have done this thing and have not withheld your only son, I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your offspring will possess the gates of their enemies. And all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed My command." (Genesis 22:15-18 HCSB)

CHAPTER 21

The Fingerprints of God

Not all theologians have lacked faith. Perhaps as many as one-third have believed the promises to Jacob whose Author is God. In 1876, Alfred Edersheim elaborated on the Jews' return to their promised land in his book, *Bible History, Old Testament*. Though he didn't live to see it transpire, Edersheim proved himself faithful to the Word: "Jehovah once more renewed to [Abram] the promise of the land, as far as his eye could range, bestowing it upon Abram and his 'seed for ever.' For the terms of this promise were not made void by the seventy years which Judah spent in the captivity of Babylon, nor yet are they annulled by the eighteen centuries of Israel's present unbelief and dispersion. The promise of the land is to Abram's 'seed for ever.' The land and the people God has joined together; and though now the one lies desolate, like a dead body, and the other wanders unresting, as it were a disembodied spirit, God will again bring them to each other in the days when His promise shall be finally established. So Abram must have understood the word of Jehovah." ⁵⁰

Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? *or* shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth and shut *the womb*? saith thy God. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. (Isaiah 66:7-12)

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For nearly two thousand years, it had been unimaginable; yet on November 29, 1947, thirty-three countries, a 59% majority, voted in favor of UN General Assembly Resolution 181⁵¹ and created a nation for the Jewish homeland. How uncanny—its borders lay within ancient Israel and fulfilled the prophecies!

Then, on May 14, 1948,⁵² Israel reclaimed her independence from Britain. As though raised from the dead, the dry bones God had shown the prophet Ezekiel, Israel sprang to life again! The land Mark Twain called barren and god-forsaken now abounds with fruitful orchards, foliage, and vineyards. Those who refuted the Jewish right to their nation had developed misinterpretations and opinions that distorted the obvious truth of the clear Word:

Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, the LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land. (Jeremiah 23:7-8)

The LORD redeemed Israel *from the hand of him that was stronger than he.* (See Jer. 31:11) Shocked by what they saw, the Allied troops rescued the nearly dead Jews from Nazi holocaust camps. The remnant, *like them that dream* (See Ps. 126:1), reached their homeland shores that reassured them of His faithfulness: "*Hath God said ...?*" (See Gen. 3:1) Of course He has!

For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel and Ephraim *is my firstborn.*

Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare *it* in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered

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Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. (Jeremiah 31:7-11)

Abraham delivered the blessings by faith to Isaac who bestowed them by faith to Jacob who wrestled the Lord for a blessing and received the name *Israel* by his tenacious faith. The generational bestowal concerns their lineage: i.e. the genealogy of Israel who fathered twelve tribal leaders, establishing a chosen people and nation, memorialized forever and remaining today.

O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen. He *is* the LORD our God: *his* judgments *are* in all the earth. He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations. Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: When they were *but* a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.
(Psalm 105:6-12)

The Sign of Israel

Teachers often distort the ancient covenant by redefining its words. Spiritualizing the promises, they receive the subtlety of the serpent's deceit, agreeing that God did not mean what He said. False teachers obfuscate the truth and indoctrinate others to believe them. The day will come when God will laugh at their wisdom; He will hold them in derision. He will scatter their proud thoughts and humiliate the mighty, putting them to shame. Proud Goliath will topple, struck by one small stone.

Why do we, who come from all nations, entrust our lives to a Jew for our salvation? Why did eyewitnesses testify that He rose from the dead after three days, a fact for which they suffered and died? Why was the blessing of Abraham's seed given to the gentiles? How did a Jewish Galilean perform such astounding miracles while calling God His *Father*? How can these things have happened, yet Israel does not believe in Him? But God did not forget or forsake His chosen people.

The God of His Word

It was all foretold by the Jewish prophets. Neither Jew nor gentile is complete without the other because God gave His Word for all the families of the earth to be blessed, and His salvation extends to the nations.

The seed sown is not what it will be; the corruptible seed cannot inherit the incorruptible. First the corruptible appears; after its destruction, the incorruptible; however, everything that exists has its assigned order. (See 1 Cor. 15:35-50)

Apart from the Jewish nation, the kingdom of heaven would not arrive. Unless our Savior reigns for a thousand years, His everlasting kingdom will not come. But His kingdom will come, and the kingdom of David will endure without end because no one can thwart the plans of Israel's God.

... And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and *let* not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. ... And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

(Luke 21:20-22, 24)

Don't you know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel to David and his descendants forever by a covenant of salt? (2 Chronicles 13:5 HCSB)

So that you will not be conceited, brothers, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery: a partial hardening has come to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

**The Liberator will come from Zion;
He will turn away godlessness from Jacob.
And this will be My covenant with them,
when I take away their sins.**

(Continued)

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Regarding the gospel, they are enemies for your advantage, but regarding election, they are loved because of their forefathers, since God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable. ... For God has imprisoned all in disobedience, so that He may have mercy on all.

(Romans 11:25-29, 32 HCSB; cf. Isaiah 59:20-21)

Yeshua prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, as well as the dispersion of Jews to all nations, and later, their return to the ancient city in the Promised Land.

Many scholars deny the right of Israel to exist as a nation, teaching “replacement theology,” seen in Chapter 13. Although it was once a compelling argument, the fact that God has done what He said He would do must be disconcerting to replacement theologians who come from a long line of cynicism. Though He promised to re-gather them from all nations and re-establish the Jews in Israel, their homeland, some still refuse to believe God. When He returns, *shall he find faith on the earth?* (See Lk. 18:8)

And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ...

And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *child*. But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 12:7-9, 13-17 NASB)

The God of His Word

Jews have suffered wars and captivities for millennia. In a world opposed to goodness, today genocide is rampant, and its frequent victims are without intervention from a single righteous nation. Since the resurrection, believers in the Scriptures have been crucified, beheaded, and slain along with Jews. Why?

According to the *Revelation*, there was warfare in heaven after the ascension of Christ. Michael and his angels routed the devil and won the victory over Satan, casting him to earth where he continues his rampage against those whom God has chosen for His divine plans. In a vision or by foreknowledge, Yeshua said He saw the devil cast from heaven to earth. Jews have endured persecution since the serpent is furious, and his time is short.

Invisible forces of evil, fallen celestial beings, used Rome to crush Israel. Jews who believed in the Savior fled Jerusalem, warned by messengers of God just weeks prior to the siege that lasted from AD 66-70. They found safe haven in a city across the Jordan River, Pella⁵³ in Perea, while the battles against Rome continued in Judea. The war ended with the deaths of multitudes of Jews, crucified by troops under Titus in AD 70. Possibly over a million Jews were slain in just three years. According to the prophecy, the devil persecuted them who had given the world a Savior. Now he pursues the sons of Israel, including them who have faith in the atonement:

'If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me—I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies—or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land. ... Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt

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in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD." (Leviticus 26:40-42, 44-45 NASB)

Then Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment and cast lots. (Lk. 23:34) Roman soldiers, *dogs*, did this. Has the Father not heard His prayer? He forgave His persecutors; why do we judge them?

"Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproves,
So do not despise the discipline of the Almighty."
(Job 5:17 NASB; cf. Hebrews 12:5) –Eliphaz, to Job

For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.
(Proverbs 3:12; cf. Hebrews 12:6)

The Envied Nation

The restoration of Israel is essential to the redemption of our own bodies. The reason? God kept His part of the covenant even when Israel broke it, and He keeps His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob even though they sinned. Now our love and desire for them to gain their inheritance reveal our love for God the Father.

He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for Ahab's daughter was his wife. He did what was evil in God's sight, but because of the covenant the LORD had made with David, He was unwilling to destroy the house of David since the LORD had promised to give a lamp to David and to his sons forever. (2 Chronicles 21:6-7 HCSB) [This passage refers to Jehoram, a wicked king of Judah]

The ongoing warfare against Israel is perpetrated by a spirit of covetousness. Satan first envied his Maker and coveted His throne; now his followers envy the Jews, His chosen ones, and covet Jerusalem, the city of the great King, the place God chose for His own name.

Already the Lord is grafting Israel's branches back into the olive tree, spiritual Israel, which thrives by the nourishment of its root, the Word of God. When we look at Abraham, we see both a

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physical and a spiritual man who lived by faith in the promised seed, our Savior; and He makes us Abraham's children by the same faith.

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

(Galatians 1:8-9 NKJV)

The devil is a liar, disguised as an angel of light. If he could, he would use a man to change the name of God, but no man can imitate the righteousness or the love of God in Messiah. Yeshua came in His Father's name and in His Father's authority, and His name has been changing lives ever since. It is our turn to draw the Jews to Jesus by our love for them. They can recognize the Spirit of the Lord as He shines through believers, and envy stirs their faith to rise.

After giving the covenants and promises and declaring the good news to the Jews first, God hardened their hearts for good reasons: to show His mercies and greatness to the gentiles while keeping the Jews separate until the end in order to restore them to their land, keeping His promise. Long ago, they moved Him to jealousy by their wandering hearts. They provoked Him to open the kingdom to the nations, and He made the unclean gentiles clean—as their promised inheritance! O, the wisdom and the faithfulness of God!

They have moved me to jealousy with *that which is not* God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with *those which are not* a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. (Deuteronomy 32:21)

Now He's lifting the veil from Jewish hearts, revealing the reason for their destiny, to save all of the chosen children of God. He has whittled Israel to a tiny point like a fulcrum on which the world turns. He is the Potter, the Artisan, the Creator of all things for the revelation of Himself to men and to angels, that we might understand the fear of the LORD, enjoy the love of

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Abba, and praise the glory of His presence forever! *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for forever.* (Ps. 125:1)

Was Israel ever destroyed, or were her people ever scattered for any reason other than their sins? Never. We live in the generation when God drew the Jews back home again with love. Though a terrible time of darkness and judgment is imminent, it heralds the dawn of a new day when Jerusalem will be established over all the earth. Therefore, the prophets exhort us to keep the faith:

And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for firstborn. In that day there shall be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. (Zechariah 12:10-11 NKJV)

“When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, then they shall know that I *am* the LORD their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer. And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,’ says the Lord GOD.” (Ezekiel 39:27-29 NKJV)

The Child

The centuries changed the world, but not the promise. The Jews were scattered to the nations but never forgot the promise: “Next year in Jerusalem!” was their adage. It came to pass that they returned to their land, looking much like Jacob when he returned home to face Esau. However, Esau, seeing his brother Jacob, hobbling across the brook, showed compassion and pity, whereas the Ishmaelites hated their brothers who returned to their homeland, and they’ve wanted to destroy them ever since.

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No other nation has been scattered, destroyed, and then re-established—only Israel. Fulfilling Jeremiah 31:23, Jews in Israel speak Hebrew again; the national language was an unused tongue for two thousand years! The fingerprints of God are all over the little nation called by the name God gave Jacob—Israel!

Now two women *who were* harlots came to the king, and stood before him. And one woman said, “O my lord, this woman and I dwell in the same house; and I gave birth while she *was* in the house. Then it happened, the third day after I had given birth, that this woman also gave birth. And *we were* together; no one *was* with us in the house, except the two of us in the house. And this woman’s son died in the night, because she lay on him. So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from my side, while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. And when I rose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead. But when I had examined him in the morning, indeed, he was not my son whom I had borne.” Then the other woman said, “No! But the living one *is* my son, and the dead one *is* your son.” And the first woman said, “No! But the dead one *is* your son, and the living one *is* my son.” Thus they spoke before the king.

And the king said, “The one says, ‘This *is* my son, who lives, and your son *is* the dead one’; and the other says, ‘No! But your son *is* the dead one, and my son *is* the living one.’” Then the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, “Divide the living child in two, and give half to one, and half to the other.” Then the woman whose son was living spoke to the king, for she yearned with compassion for her son; and she said, “O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!” But the other said, “Let him be neither mine nor yours, *but* divide him.” So the king answered and said, “Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him; she *is* his mother.” And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God *was* in him to administer justice. (1 Kings 3:16-28 NKJV)

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This particular court case was included in the Bible to lend insight to an age-old mystery. Though not an allegory, there's a message hidden in the true story of the two women: theirs is an ancient argument between envy and ownership that applies to Ishmael and Isaac and to Esau and Jacob. The descendants of Ishmael became a multitude; so also did Israel's sons, but they were scattered till their return to the land.

Both women were harlots as both Ishmaelites and Israelites had committed harlotry against God. He had also rescued each of them at different times in their histories because they were both physically descended from Abraham. Ishmael was born of a bondwoman, a servant, but Isaac by faith in a promise.

As each woman had her own child, both Ishmaelites and Israelites have had lands to protect and develop. Most nations gain their lands by victories, but in 1947, Jews and Arabs gained their lands by a partition and an international resolution.

Although both of the harlots had babies, one mother lay on her child, suffocating him as he slept. After her child's death, not caring about her friend, she coveted the living baby.

After their return, the Jews immediately began cultivating their land, and the desert sands that had lain waste for two thousand years started to thrive with life and greenery because they cared for their land. Right beside them, the Ishmaelites had been living in the land by the grace of God but hadn't cared for or cultivated it for millennia, so it lies barren, fruitless, and dead. The story of the two women illustrates that only one is the true mother of the living child; the other wants to divide it.

Israel is the child; the Israelites, the true mother. Their enemies claim rights to a land not theirs. If they could, they'd erase the memory of Israel from the earth; however, no one can thwart the plans of God or prevent His promises from fulfillment. No one can destroy the people He appointed for His glory, because the God of Israel really is God; there is no other God.

The argument that had entered Solomon's court resulted in the evidence of his wisdom. As Solomon in the story of the two women, the Son of David will take His place on the throne in Jerusalem as the Judge of all nations. He will decide the verdict with righteousness and truth, administering justice on behalf of the real mother on that great Day when the case goes to Court.

CHAPTER 22

Messiah

For His glory, God chose the Jews to bring forth the Savior, and He chose His Word to become His Jewish Son, the Son of man, to save all who'd believe. Though the nations of the world have hated the Jews and their God, out of the nations, God has chosen Israel's inheritance. The world hates the light of truth and rejects the Savior of Israel because men *love darkness rather than light*. (See *Jn. 3:19*) Many claim they have received Him but live in shameful thoughts, sinful desires, and godless words and deeds, rejecting His light; even so, if anyone repents and believes in Jesus, He forgives him and washes him as an infant passes through the water and the blood and is born and washed.

At the time of Yeshua, the rabbis rejected Him as the Son of God, the Prophet, the Messiah. Listening to the Sanhedrin, their legal council, even the people urged His death.

When the temple authorities delivered Him into the hands of gentile rulers, no one stopped them; they all feared expulsion from their synagogues and defamation by their peers. Thus they sacrificed the just and holy One to injustice and indignities as their silence condemned them; nevertheless, God soon forgave many thousands of the same Jews who repented and believed in His Son.

After meeting with Him at night, Nicodemus, a rabbi of the Sanhedrin, returned, suggesting the synagogue rulers should listen carefully to Yeshua before judging Him. The Pharisees, known experts in the Tenakh, retorted, *Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet*. (*Jn. 7:52b*) [Verses 7:53-8:11 do not appear in any of the earliest manuscripts; the event might have occurred but was added much later to the text, which continues:]

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true." Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and

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where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone *in it*, but I and the Father who sent Me. Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.” (John 8:12-18 NASB)

Where is the reference for the Father’s testimony concerning the One called the Light of the world? We find it in the ninth chapter of the book of Isaiah the prophet, which also refers to the despised home of the Savior:

Nevertheless, the gloom of the distressed land will not be like that of the former times when He humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. But in the future He will bring honor to the Way of the Sea, to the land east of the Jordan, and to Galilee of the nations.

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of darkness,
a light has dawned. (Isaiah 9:1-2 HCSB)

Yeshua’s words refuted the Pharisees immediately after they challenged His right as Messiah, insisting the Scriptures don’t mention a prophet out of Galilee. But the Lord knew the Tenakh far better than they did: the Prophet indeed came from Galilee where His light shined on those who walked in darkness, just as His Father had testified about Him. At another time,

Jesus answered, “The light will be with you only a little longer. Walk while you have the light so that darkness doesn’t overtake you. The one who walks in darkness doesn’t know where he’s going. While you have the light, believe in the light so that you may become sons of light.” Jesus said this, then went away and hid from them. (John 12:35-36 HCSB)

Since Yeshua came through David’s line by His virgin birth and supernaturally rose from death, He is the legitimate heir as David’s *eternal* seed, King of his *eternal* kingdom. The angelic

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proclamation of Yeshua's birth announced Messianic promises, fulfilled along with the everlasting kingdom, which succeeds by His resurrection from the dead.

Again, the temporal comes first; the eternal supersedes it. The Seed of the Holy Spirit is His Word, which entered mortal flesh to unite with the physical seed of David in a virgin. Since His conception, Yeshua was the firstborn of the Spirit; though cut off from His Father, His Holy Spirit renewed His life, and thus He is the firstborn from the dead.

Everyone who is spiritually-minded will be like Him: He is one Spirit in us, and we are one body as we walk in His Spirit, each ministering to the other members of the same body. His Seed remains in us by His Word and His Spirit, by which we have been born again. We are in Him because He is the Son of man, and thus together, we are family.

Now His body, once flesh like ours, is incorruptible, raised from its previous mortal condition. As His bride, we are one in the Spirit and in the body with Him for *the two shall be one flesh*. (See Gen. 2:24) His life brings together gentiles and Jews as one, and His Spirit unites us as one in Him by the love of God the Father, though great tribulation will be the melting pot:

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. (John 10:16)
[Gentiles and Jews are not of the same sheep pen, but we will all be one in Him.]

Seed of Judah

Messiah is Judah's seed, not Levi's: *Judah is my scepter*. (See Ps. 60:7; 108:8; Gen. 49:10) He is King and Priest—not temporal as Levi but perpetual. He came as Judah's son through David to fulfill the promise, but He is also David's Lord. How can David's son be his Lord? *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool*. (Ps. 110:1) How can a mortal be the eternal King?

Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe *became*

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white *and* glistening. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, *that* Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said.

While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen. (Luke 9:28-36 NKJV)

Why did Moses and Elijah speak to Messiah about His imminent death? Moses had experienced death, and God buried him. Elijah was translated into an incorruptible, supernatural body. Messiah would experience both death and the translation of His body; He also would ascend into heaven.

The lesser is blessed by the greater. Rejoicing in righteousness, the Father chose to send Moses the lawgiver and Elijah the prophet to speak with His Son, the Messiah—the eternal Word of the Spirit in both the Law and the Prophets. As the Sacrifice of the new covenant, He would fulfill their words:

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: (John 1:10-12)

Son of David

When God sent His Word to be made His Son, thousands of Jews, the first to believe, were the minority of their nation. Most clung to the words of their misguided teachers and rejected the true faith, like most churches, not to mention synagogues, today. Just as the prophets before Him had upbraided the chosen people

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on account of their sins, Jesus would weep, speaking about the judgment of Jerusalem; yet, as the risen Son of David, the New Jerusalem is His eternal joy:

And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed *are* the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. (Luke 23:27-30)

What advantage then has the Jew, or what *is* the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written:

“That You may be justified in Your words,
“And may overcome when You are judged.”
(Romans 3:1-4 NKJV; cf. Ps 51:4)

The new covenant has been the hope of Jews from the time the father of our faith offered his *only son*, born of Sarah’s flesh. God had said to Abram: *And I have established My covenant between Me and thee, and thy seed after thee, to their generations, for a covenant age-during, to become God to thee, and to thy seed after thee; (Gen. 17:7 YLT)* If a virgin gave birth and her son was called *Immanuel*, or, “God with us,” who would be His Father? Before the conception, the angel Gabriel announced the birth and the reason for the birth name of the promised Son:

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. (Luke 1:30-33) [I.e. “YHWH saves”]

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Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

(Isaiah 7:13-14 NIV) [I.e. “God with us”]

These are difficult words for Jews to resolve. On an earthly level, Yeshua is the Son of man whose resurrection opened the way for the vast populace of an eternal kingdom. Would the seed of Abraham be his King?

“The LORD declares to you: The LORD Himself will make a house for you. When your time comes and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to Me. ...” (2 Samuel 7:11b-14a HCSB) – Nathan, to David

The promise wasn't to Solomon but to Messiah, raised up after David's death. Though David had crowned Solomon as his successor, only the Son of God could be an eternal King. The seed of David, though *mortal*, had to be an *immortal* to rule the *everlasting* kingdom. As God had said, “*I will be a father to him ...*”; thus God became a Father by His eternal Word and gave His Son in sacrifice for the iniquity and sins of the people. [Is. 53]

After conquering death, His Son became King of all. *But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the clans of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* (Mic. 5:2) [Yeshua was born in Bethlehem, the city of David.]

For to which of the angels did He ever say, **You are My Son; today I have become Your Father**, or again, **I will be His Father and He will be My Son**? When He again brings His firstborn into the world, He says, **And all God's angels must worship Him**. And about the angels He says:

**He makes His angels winds.
And His servants a fiery flame,** (Continued)

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but to the Son:

**Your throne, God,
is forever and ever,
and the scepter of Your kingdom
is a scepter of justice.
You have loved righteousness
and hated lawlessness;
This is why God, Your God,
has anointed You
with the oil of joy
rather than Your companions.**

And:

**In the beginning, Lord,
You established the earth,
and the heavens are the works of Your
hands;
They will perish, but You remain.
They will all wear out like clothing;
You will roll them up like a cloak,
and they will be changed like a robe.
But You are the same,
and Your years will never end.**
(Hebrews 1:5-12 HCSB)

Son of Man

Yeshua was the Father's *only begotten Son*, uniquely the Word, the Offspring of His Soul, in our flesh; He was conceived by the virgin with God as His Father; He was the eternity of God in the humanity of Adam. His unique birth came by the Word from His Holy Spirit—conceived within the seed of the virgin. Never before and never again—just once, this would happen. Before His birth, the Word referred to others as “sons of God,” but God had not begotten them by a virgin; they were spiritual sons:

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. ... When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:4, 7) [Stars emit sounds.]

The God of His Word

He [Nebuchadnezzar] answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. (Daniel 3:25)

Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire. (Ps. 104:4) [His angels are unseen spirits, sons of God, who can appear.] He also says, Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. (Heb. 13:2)

Angels appear as men but are holy, extraordinary, created beings of great strength in the Spirit. Three of them appeared to Abram and ate lunch with him; two were angels, the third was revealed as the LORD. Daniel also spoke to Gabriel who looked like a man to him:

Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am *now* come to give thee skill and understanding. (Daniel 9:21)

In Yeshua, the Word of God, which is Spirit [He said, *My words are spirit*], genuinely identified Himself as the son of man, the only begotten Son of God. He became a man to redeem man. By His life, He made the way to eternal life; by His blood, He made the eternal atonement. Only by His Word and His Spirit can we walk in His steps to stand before Him by His grace.

The Redeemer was the Word, activating miracles and doing the will of God in Moses, Elijah, the prophets, and in all who have believed. Looking at His *outer* form, they only saw a man; they couldn't imagine who He was in truth: the Holy Word of the Creator, the Holy Seed of the Spirit, uniting us as holy—one new man as we receive His words, planted in our hearts:

For, let this mind be in you that is also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal to God, but did empty himself, the form of a servant having taken, in the likeness of men having been made, and in fashion having been found as a man, he

Messiah

humbled himself, having become obedient unto death—death even of a cross, wherefore, also, God did highly exalt him, and gave to him a name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee may bow—of heavenlies, and earthlies, and what are under the earth—and every tongue may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Php 2:5-11 YLT)

Messiah the Branch

Of Jacob's natural branches, One stands out: the Righteous Branch of the tribe of Judah, the promised One who would save Israel. Raised in *Nazareth* [meaning "branch," or "shoot"], the LORD our Righteousness is God in Messiah.

The pieces fit together like a well-planned mystery: the seed of Eve (See Gen 3:15), the son of the virgin (See Is. 7:14), "God with us" was a descendant of David (See 2 Sam. 7:14). He is the Savior of us all. *Despised and rejected* (See Is 53), He chose gentiles to provoke Jews to jealousy. He never sinned, though soldiers spat on Him, beat Him with rods, scourged Him with whips, and pulled out His beard:

Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
(Isaiah 53:4-6 NKJV)

When God removed the partition that had separated Jews from the nations, He chose the nations to share in the inheritance of the Jews. We became their family by trusting in their Savior. Rending the curtain, God opened His heart to us, so that as we open ourselves to Him and to one another, we can be one: in the Spirit, together we are citizens of heaven, created by one truth, one will, one love, God our Father. We're living stones, fitted

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closely, even compressed by trials—sparkling gems of the New Jerusalem, dressed like a bride for her Bridegroom.

Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 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; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (Ephesians 2:11-19)

One day soon, Yeshua will return from heaven in glory with myriads of angels, openly revealing Himself to His chosen people. When at last they receive Him, He will open His arms to them, rescuing them, and keeping His promises to Abraham as He has for four thousands of years.

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.’” (Acts 3:19-23 NIV) [See Dt. 18:15, 18-19] –Peter, before his arrest, at Solomon’s Colonnade

Messiah

But how can they call on Him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about Him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: **How beautiful are the feet of those who announce the gospel of good things!** But all did not obey the gospel. For Isaiah says, **Lord, who has believed our message?** So faith comes through what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ. But I ask, "Did they not hear?" Yes, they did:

**Their voice has gone out to all the earth,
and their words to the ends
of the inhabited world.**

But I ask, "Did Israel not understand?" First, Moses said:

**I will make you jealous of those
who are not a nation;
I will make you angry by a nation
that lacks understanding.**

And Isaiah says boldly:

**I was found
by those who were not looking for Me;
I revealed Myself
to those who were not asking for Me.**

But to Israel he says: **All day long I have spread out
My hands to a disobedient and defiant people.**

(Romans 10:14-21 HCSB; cf. Is 52:7; Nah 1:15; Is 53:1; Ps 19:4; Deut 32:21; Is 65:1-2)

If Yeshua were not the Messiah, then He could neither have fulfilled the miracles of the prophecies, nor been a true prophet Himself, because He said He is Messiah. His followers saw Him after He rose from the dead and died to testify that He's alive.

Two thousand years ago, He conformed to the prophets' words. He's seated at His Father's right hand; Daniel watched Him approach the throne. According to the prophecies, He'll light the skies when He returns to make Jerusalem His throne. (See Dan. 7:9-14) Scoffers will see Him only once.

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God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the Elijah section—how he pleads with God against Israel?

**Lord, they have killed Your prophets
and torn down Your altars.
and I am the only one left,
and they are trying to take my life!**

But what was God's reply to him? **I have left 7,000 men for Myself who have not bowed to Baal.** In the same way, then, there is also at the present time a remnant chosen by grace. Now if by grace, then it is not by works; otherwise grace ceases to be grace.

(Romans 11:2-6 HCSB; cf. Heb 1:1; 1 Kings 19:10, 14, 18)

The distinguishing characteristics of the Messiah are in His righteousness and justice, grace and truth, love and mercy. He's the perfect One, the chosen Sacrifice. Did Yeshua prove He has the legal right to rule on David's throne forever? If the virtue of His life proved Him worthy of the everlasting throne, then He is the true Messiah. Did His innocence merit His resurrection? Then by virtue of His victory over sin and death, He is the King who reigns over all.

The week before His crucifixion, the nation hailed Him, saying, *Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.* (See Mat. 21:9; also Mk. 11:9-10, Lk. 19:38) They nearly crowned Him King!

Only a few days later, a religious council crucified Him by the hands of dogs—gentiles—Roman soldiers. *For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.* (Ps. 22:16) Three days later, He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: (See Rom. 1:4) Like Abraham, Yeshua had seen a higher Jerusalem, a city made by the Word. He therefore said, *My kingdom is not of this world.* (See Jn. 18:36) Here is a mystery of the kingdom:

There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the

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dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 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 man Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. (1 Corinthians 15:41-46 NKJV)

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
(Revelation 21:1-2)

The Love of God

His Son died to taste death for every man when the Father removed His Holy Spirit from Him; cutting Him off, fulfilling the prophecy, separated from His Son—cutting His own heart, tearing the sanctuary curtain that had covered the holy place:

He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. (Isaiah 53:8)

The Spirit is life; but His Father prepared Him for the final throes of death. As the Son of man, Yeshua took death for us, and His Father shared the agony and pain of the separation.

He took our sins in His body and offered His soul for our guilt. Jesus committed His mortal spirit to the Father and died... *the body without the spirit is dead, (See Jas. 2:26)* Then, *Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18)*, His soul entered the core of the earth where He preached to the spirits of men who had lived in Noah’s time, *now dead* and in prison. [More on 1 Pet. 3:18-20, 4:6 in *Mysteries of the Ancient Word*]

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love

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of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3:17b-21 NIV)

His Father made Yeshua His scepter, having conquered sin and death, saying, *Judah is my scepter.* (See Ps. 60:7; 108:8; Gen. 49:10) Now He justifies anyone who turns to Him in repentance and faith since, by His single act of obedience, Jesus-Y'shua owns the right to judge and reign from David's throne forever. ... *for with God all things are possible.* (See Mk. 10:27)

For the Scripture says, "*Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.*" For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "*whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.*" (Romans 10:11-13 NKJV; ref. Isaiah 28:6, Joel 2:32) [That Name is in His name.]

The Father raised Him by His Spirit; as One in the Spirit, He raised Himself from death. Thus the Messiah became the eternal heir by the work of the Father: *God ... by his Son ... when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.* (excerpts from Heb. 1:1-3) He was entirely alone when He purged our sins and took our guilt away. Can we treat as common or neglect such love and live?

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? (Hebrews 2:1-4 NKJV)

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speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”* This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects *her* husband. (Ephesians 5:19-33 NKJV)

The passage above *is a great mystery*, for marriage doesn't merely pertain to flesh and blood as we might think; instead, the words allude to the spiritual reality in the union of a man and a woman, so closely relating to each other that each receives the other. Then he is in her, and she is in him. They communicate almost like speaking to oneself. It's as though each were thinking aloud; she shares his thoughts and his emotions, as he does hers. They relate face to face, word to word, heart to heart; their affection for each other unites the two as one in the flesh, and

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their sexual relationship expresses the bond of that love. Thus, love unifies them as one in the marriage bed where they are one flesh as well. Marriage was made for a man and woman in love.

Though few have known such love, when a man submits to Jesus Christ and cares for his wife as Jesus loves the church, her heart should easily yield to his authority, and their relationship together patterns Christ and His church.

When we respond to the love of the Lord in full surrender to His will, we live in Him as He lives through us. Then we are one with Him, and He speaks through us. That's how He shares His life with believers who yield to His will in response to His love. Abiding in Him is not a contractual agreement: it's an attitude of the heart that's always open and available for Him; nothing is held back or hidden, but we silently release our hearts to Jesus. In Spirit and truth, we let Him know us all the time, every moment.

On a Role

Though the Scriptures adjure men to love their wives as the Lord loves the church, not many men have even attempted the feat. It's a commission of high calling. Love is a wife's greatest need and its challenge is to the husband. By esteeming his wife as himself, the husband's strong nature grows temperate.

When men love, they experience God who reveals Himself to the hearts of those who love. *He who does not love does not know not God, for God is love. (1 Jn. 4:8 NKJV)*

Since Messiah mercifully sacrificed His life and drew us into the loving union with God, He gave the man a sacrificial role in the marriage relationship. A man who neglects his wife neglects their relationship. If he does the same in his relationship with Christ, He will say, "I never knew you!"

A foolish man is proud, unkind, angry, short-tempered, and unyielding, but a wise man is disciplined by self-control, leading to godliness and love. Tenderness, understanding, and patience will win his wife to his side forever. As he shares his thoughts and his feelings with her, she reciprocates. When they look at each other, their eyes dance. This is love: knowing each other with affection and respect. Then each responds to the other with heartfelt admiration and acceptance.

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When His Son's flesh was torn, the curtain of the temple's holy place was also torn as the Father opened up His heart to us; thus, as we open our hearts to Him, with nothing veiled—we can know Him as He knows us. By emotional and spiritual intimacy, the relationship becomes a union.

Christ and the church are connected in marital relationship. What does this mean to a man? Taking the wife's role, he must bare his soul to God if he wants intimacy with Him. He may not hide himself from Him; he's there for God all the time. If he refuses to disclose his heart to God, then he doesn't know God. If he is hiding something, even in the recesses of his mind, is that intimacy with the One who calls him to be holy as He is holy?

We must all expose ourselves to His light because we are all His bride. If anything is hidden in any dark places of our hearts, we must confess it by faith in His love and forgiveness. In the fear of God, we turn to Him, trusting His forgiveness and His power to cleanse us according to His promises. And how do we love Him? By our reverential fear and submission to His will, we grow to become like Him. That's when we truly love Him.

Marriage teaches us how some of us know Christ, but others only go through the motions that look like a relationship. Behind closed doors, personal intimacy is not their experience. This was true of the religious leaders in the days of Christ; we can learn a lot about ourselves from them.

Hypocrites will cry out, but Christ will say, "Go away from Me, all of you who practice iniquity!" They professed the faith, knew the right words, but were hiding from God—retaining shameful thoughts, they resisted the Holy Spirit. They agreed to the covenant but walked away from it, preferring the dark to the light that exposes hidden things. This is why it is written: *But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!* (Mat. 6:23) We must let His fire cleanse us if we profess His name.

Marriage Rules

Yeshua described the divine plan for marriage, commanding husbands to love their wives fervently and unconditionally as He loves us. If the Lord is the Judge at the door of the heart; how do we speak to our mates? How do we look at them? How

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well do we know them? The Law of Moses and the words of Christ are in harmony on this matter, but the church has not carefully investigated the Scriptures:

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

(Matthew 19:3-9 NASB)

No man has the right to despise his wife who is faithful and respectful to him. God has called us to peace in the marriage relationship. But the Law is for men who harden their hearts against their wives, in which case, the certificate of divorce freed her to marry another. She was not under bondage to an unloving man. When Jesus spoke to them, he commanded men to love their wives.

Marriage is a refuge, a place where a woman and man share their lives; where each loves, understands, and knows the other better than anyone else. They're best friends. It was not intended as a place of pain, loneliness, or physical or emotional illness:

*When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. (Deuteronomy 24:1-2) [Christ allows this between the believer and unbeliever.]*

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The rabbis and lawyers challenged Christ, citing Moses on divorce; they thought Moses had justified their practice. Yeshua clarified Moses' law, explaining that divorce had been permitted because they were hardhearted, as indeed his audience was.

The Law presented an instance in which the husband had emotionally separated himself from his wife, constantly finding fault in her, even judging her, believing she was unclean; therefore, Moses said if the wife saw no favor in his eyes for her, the husband should *allow* a divorce. The law allowed divorce in mercy toward the *woman!* Yet the leaders had not understood it.

Neither Moses nor Paul denies the teaching of Christ. When Yeshua came, His words convicted their calloused hearts, even in the public places, but the seeds of truth never settle easily in hard soil. He would have changed their hearts, calling them to repent, but they were blind to mercy, love, and forgiveness. Their proud hearts always resisted the Holy Spirit. That's the way of the natural man.

Biblical counsel strengthens, unifies, and preserves lives, marriages, families, and nations. A marriage that succeeds influences the lives of others in positive ways; none of us belongs to himself alone. Our lives and marriages affect others for better or worse.

If a husband requires his wife to do things against her conscience, should she obey him regarding those things? No, but many marriage beds are defiled by acts of sodomy. The wife must obey her husband but not with sinful behavior.

Here is an illustration: Government is good because God has ordained it, but not all governors are good. Godless men create ungodly laws. Shall we disobey God and obey the government if the law requires it? No, we should obey God rather than men. In the same way, He ordained the governance of marriage, but immorality has no place in the marriage bed. Do perversion and lust enslave our minds in the marriage relationship? Is that acceptable to God?

The greatest commandment is to love. In a loving marriage, hearts are healed. Loving, we forgive and find grace with God. When we love, obeying the royal command, we are at peace with God and each other. But if we use or abuse another person, we sin against God and, in marriage, against our own bodies.

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If a partner neglects the relationship, he risks his marriage. The two become one flesh, but without mutual respect, love has no foundation for love is not proud. *Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. (Eph. 5:33)* Jesus is the perfect example of humility and love—the perfect Mate for His submissive bride.

Members of His Body

The ultimate expression of love in marriage will arrive when the Bridegroom returns for His bride, His body on earth where He lives by His Spirit. Love is our highest aspiration, and the Savior passionately desires that we be united as His own body, in truth and in love.

Christ imparts forgiveness and love to us each day. If we are holy, our words and behavior reveal it; if we are carnal, the same is true. Today is the day of salvation, and *now* is the best time to repent of any known sin.

What does it mean to *walk in the Spirit*? If His Spirit were the hand, we'd be His glove. In other words, we offer ourselves to Him, and God works in us to do what pleases Him; as we cooperate, we are walk with Him in relationship with Him, and as we walk, we learn from Him. We live by His Word, and He speaks to our hearts. In this way, He accomplishes His purposes in us as we believe.

When the Holy Spirit abounds, we rejoice with Him; we are one with Christ by the Spirit, finding peace as we rest in His strength. Apart from Him, we can't be holy, but by His Holy Spirit, we can obey His will in humble surrender, which has been the command since Eden: *"Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you."* (Gen. 3:16c NIV)

Just as the husband has been given godly authority over His wife, so Christ has authority over each of us. As members of His body, our desire is for our Husband. He has authority over us, and His love most often makes our submission a pleasure. There will be times when He tests our faithfulness, requiring us to do what we resist; that's when we obey out of the fear of the Lord.

As we walk daily in His presence and keep His words, we're His body—His flesh and bones. What He wants to do, we do; where He wants to go, we go; what He wants to say, we say as

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we abide in Him. Since we care for our own flesh, we care for every member of His body and perceive others as ourselves.

By her betrothal to Christ, His bride is His, joined with Him as one. She belongs to Him and He is hers. He makes her holy by washing her in His Word, and bathing her with the truth, He raises her to victory! The union: it's all about our marriage to Christ and our personal intimacy with God.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31-32; cf. Gen 2:24)

He sent His Word into our hearts to quicken mortality as we who are two become one. He calls this unique and holy creation His bride by our union with His Word because we have received His words. His love woos our hearts to be knitted with His by prayer and our passionate desire to know Him more. Our union consummates our covenant: we, in Him and He, in us: *that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.* (Eph. 5:26-27 NKJV)

His goal is a new creation unlike Adam, who was made like Him but was not one in Him. The mystery of the new man is seen in the union of God and His Son. Singly and collectively, we are one *in* Him and *in* the Father as He is *in* us by our faith in His Son, *that God may be all in all.* (See 1 Cor. 15:28)

As members of His body, therefore, we interact with one another, sharing His life—Jews and gentiles—all ethnicities, races, colors, and nations. For this purpose, Jews were scattered into all nations: to gather all nations to Him. His truth makes us all one. The closer we are, the more brightly we shine.

Are we far from Him who is near to us? We are only as close as our union—together we can proclaim His love with compassion to a deceived and dying world—declaring the truth. We can embrace them who are not like us, for Christ cared for us and rescued us from the wrath of God though we were not at all like Him. A man and his wife are often opposites, but they become one by their love and submission to each other.

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Now we remain His sign of hope for them who are unlike us; God sends His Word in us to them just because He loved us, and we reciprocate by telling others what He's done for us. He keeps changing our hearts as we learn the gain of sacrifice. *She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. (Prov. 31:12)*

The Law has limits, restricting us who strive to keep it, but the Spirit removes our limitations, expanding and increasing us—spirit, soul, and body—with greater abilities and visions. The key to these things is our faith in the indwelling Christ as we communicate with Him in this marriage of two, becoming one since the time He poured His Spirit into our opened hearts:

“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old *wine*, immediately desires new; for he says, ‘The old is better.’” (Luke 5:37-39 NKJV)

She Is His Temple

“For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain.” (Galatians 2:18-20 NKJV) – Paul, reproving Peter for his hypocrisy in returning to dietary laws like one under the law as though doing the works of the law for his salvation.

Unless we believe the inspired words, we stunt our growth at the point of our unbelief. Old wineskins have limited ability to live by His Spirit; He would empower us to be like Yeshua. If we refuse to believe His words, we will shrink back to who we used to be, retaining only a semblance of the faith we first had.

Believers are the metaphorical building stones of the city of God. Unlike pebbles or quarried stones, we're sparkling gems, purified by fire and glorified under pressure. His words shape,

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chisel, and place us side by side in our proper locations. Finally, He fits us together, allocating our places in the holy city.

“O afflicted one, storm-tossed, *and* not comforted,
Behold, I will set your stones in antimony,
And your foundations I will lay in sapphires.
“Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies,
And your gates of crystal,
And your entire wall of precious stones.”
(Isaiah 54:11-12 NASB)

The congregation is spiritual, yet tangible; diverse, yet one with the Lord. We are not prepared to meet Him by men's teachings but by His unchanging Word. In our holy faith, we are the eternal habitation of God, entirely the body of His Holy Spirit though the Spirit of God is everywhere. We are members in the body of Yeshua the Messiah, within us by His life-giving Spirit.

Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. (Galatians 4:25-26 NASB)

The scripture likens Hagar to Mount Sinai, corresponding to the earthly Jerusalem, still under the Law because she was a bond-slave. Sarah is like the New Jerusalem, free and not in bondage. The promised Son freed us from the Law and from our bondage to carnality. Abraham begat children by two women, but spiritually he only united with Sarah. The Lord promised the inheritance to those who believe, even us who are being spiritually united with the Son of man and God.

The Intimacy

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.
(1 Corinthians 2: 9-10)

The God of His Word

Our Savior led the way for the resurrection of the members of His body; He paid the price for our redemption; sent His Spirit for our life, and ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us. Believing His words with childlike faith, we learn His ways to become a suitable match for our King. He makes us worthy as we move closer to Him in an attitude of fear and trembling.

When He returns for us, He will arrive in the most personal way. Each of us is His closest and dearest friend who loves and obeys Him because we believe in Him. We know His words are true, and our confidence in Him will not disappoint us. Together we're an army that's undefeated because He leads us to victory in everything. We thank Him in all things, knowing the victory is ours to His glory:

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of life; to the other, the fragrance of death. And who is equal to such a task?

(2 Corinthians 2:14-16 NIV)

Prepared for His return, His bride seeks His arrival, quiet and still before Him. Learning His voice, she is sensitive to the sound of a pebble on a pane, or a whisper as she sleeps. The truth draws her into the union of her wholeness where He heals her with His words.

The Sacred Union

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

(1 John 3:1-3 NKJV)

Now is the time to know and believe the truth, and by the truth, to unite as one. Each one is responsible to seek the purity

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of holiness by casting off the teachings of men that fail the tests of the Scriptures. As one new creature, we embody His holy bride. Our union is unseen, one in the Father, in His Holy Spirit, and in His Son; we are one in His Word. These three agree in one Name, YHWH, for God is One, and we were chosen in the union with Him. The Holy Spirit with His Word unite the Father with His Son, and He gives us His Name—*YHWH is Salvation!*

We won't look to the right or to the left, to ourselves or to others, to experiences or to traditions to know the truth. His Word is the truth. His Word delivers us from darkness and from deception because we have dared to believe God only.

It's time to discard the leaven and purify our minds with His Word, focusing on our Savior and living by the faith that obtains the goal of God in Christ Jesus—the high calling of holiness! The aspiration is higher than knowledge, above revelation, greater than prophecy: our goal is to love others in complete devotion to the Word of God: *love covers a multitude of sins.* (See *1 Pet. 4:8*) Though we stumble with our words, sometimes offensive and at other times, defensive, stepping out of place; we know He works in us, and He *will establish us in every good work.* (*1 Thess. 2:17*)

Our obedience begins by believing His words as they are written and as He clarified them. Love and humility are the surprising products of faith in His words. If we rationalize what He authored by referring to our experiences, then we are living by what we see rather than by faith in what God says. He will finish His righteousness in us by His grace, working through our faith when we *live by faith, not by sight.* (See *Hab. 2:4*)

If we consider ourselves apart from Christ in us, we're at our wits' ends. Saints have fallen into sin, short of truth and goodness. But apart from grace, the truth would condemn us all; and mercy wouldn't exist apart from the truth. But God loved us in Eden where we first fell; compassion urged Him to reveal His love to men and to angels by the epic story of our redemption.

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other.* (Psalm 85:10)

Mercy meets the truth in Yeshua-Jesus. Perfect in holiness, He offers peace for all who are far off the path. However, if we

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hide in our shame, refusing to enter the light, even as sinners; then we resist the grace of the Savior's heart. He would receive us all with forgiveness and love, but who is willing to turn to Him from sin? yet just as we are, He gives us a new life.

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:20-21 NIV)

Envisioning their union, Yeshua prayed for Jews to join with gentiles, loving one another, living proof that God sent Him. In His faithful love, He gathered His scattered ones to the land; soon He'll gather His saints to the place where His glory rests:

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:22-23 NIV)

I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”
(John 17:26 NIV) – Yeshua, praying for personal intimacy with each of us who believe.

He heals those He wounded, and out of death, raises us into His own immortality. He will not leave us in the grave. *As for me, I will behold their face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. (Ps. 17:15)*

The Consummation

He knows us though we know Him as through a veil. He carried the cross to die for her, spilling His blood for His bride; He breathed His Spirit into her, and now His life remains in her. He prepared a place for her, anticipating His return. As her faith increases, He empowers her for victory while she waits on earth for Him. These are His gifts to His bride.

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... for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:16b-17)

She had been unloved and unlovely when He loved her and called her His beloved. Made whole by His love, she searches His words to know Him; takes up her cross to follow Him; loses her life to find Him; and gives Him her soul without regret. She relinquishes her name for His, yielding her will to His until He completes her as His own. As one, they bond and rest, assured by the embrace. Her heart, her soul, her mind, and strength—all she has, she releases to Him, casting her cares on Him.

On earth the two become one flesh. In the kingdom, we are of one Spirit, and the marriage of the immortal flesh is consummated. Our union, conceived by His Word, yields a new creation of His Spirit, including all who have prepared for it:

Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.' And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. (Mat 25:7-13 NASB)

Our Husband is our King who seals us with the Signet of His life, and our godly fear secures our hearts forever. We are His true witnesses, His own body, His bride. We always want to be together, and if we're apart, we long for each other. With nothing lacking, we're whole; though once opposites, we're one at last.

Like Esther before King Xerxes, we approach His throne with courage through trepidation, because He loves us. We bow in awe before the King whose intimate embraces we have known—what mysteries!

I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.
(2 Corinthians 11:2b NIV)

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Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love *is* strong as death; jealousy *is* cruel as the grave: the coals thereof *are* coals of fire, *which hath* a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned. (Song of Songs 8:6-7)

Losing this life, each one gains life; discarding this name, we take a new name; releasing the world, each finds his destiny; relinquishing the temporal, we keep the eternal; sharing the blessing, we receive the increase; dying to the past, we live for eternity. Though we can't see the details, we long for His kingdom and His righteousness, and we are filled. His provision is greater than words—His salvation fills us with joy.

And a voice came from the throne, saying,

“Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.” Then I heard *something* like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying,

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.
(Revelation 19:5-8 NASB)

The End of A Reign

Many have feared the ominous “End of the World.” Though it will be a dark and disastrous day—a day of terror—its culmination will end Satan's reign over the world. But the end of this world's systems will establish the beginning of the kingdom of David under the authority of his seed—the King over all the earth, our best Friend. We're not oppressed by laws or bound by sins, but we are one by the intimacy of our union.

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At His designated moment, Christ will suddenly appear as a thief comes suddenly in the night. Until then, He is with us even when we don't understand or when the darkness is great or when we feel so alone. As our days turn into years, in every battle, we press in and set our focus on the finish line. Through the fray of wars, out of fiery trials, He saves us forever!

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. (Revelation 19:11-16)

... *And He Is Hers*

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. (Revelation 21:22-23)

We are His temple on earth; He is ours when the kingdom of heaven ends the divisions of time: *And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.* (Rev. 21:22)

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me

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and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:17-23) – Yeshua prayed for The union of Jews and gentiles as a sign to the world that He is the Messiah, and that the God of Israel is God of all.

For behold, I create new heavens
and a new earth.
The former things will not
be remembered or come to mind.
But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I am creating.
For behold, I am creating Jerusalem
for rejoicing, and her people for joy.
Then I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
and be glad in My people.
No longer will the voice of weeping
or the voice of crying be heard in her.
(Isaiah 65:17-19 TLV; cf. Rev. 21:1-8)

Together we've discovered the union in various places: It's in the union of God as one God in the union of one Mankind by the union of the Father and Son in the union of the Holy Spirit as God. It's the union of unbelievers as believers in the union of Jews and gentiles by the union of their common faith in the union of the Word by the union of the truth. All together, we are one in the union of God.

You are all fair, my love,
And *there is* no spot in you. ...
A garden enclosed
Is my sister, *my* spouse,
A spring shut up,
A fountain sealed. ...
A fountain of gardens,
A well of living waters,
And streams from Lebanon.
(Song of Solomon 4:7, 12, 15 NKJV)

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At last His bride fills her lamp with His Spirit and His Word. She lights the oil with the fire of her passion. Intrepid of the future, she shares His mind. The threshold of her Marriage is here as He receives her members as His own. She understands the choice, the truth, and the cost. Soon her hope is relieved, and her faith finds its home in the arms of His perfect love; all that once was lost fades away like a dream because everything else is meaningless.

Then the angel showed me a river of the water of life—bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the city's street. On either side of the river was a tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. Night shall be no more, and people will have no need for lamplight or sunlight—for *ADONAI Elohim* will shine on them, and they shall reign forever and ever! (Revelation 22:1-5 TLV)

Baruch Ha-ba b'shem ADONAI!
"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"

Joan H. Richardson



Web site: www.FaithOnEarth.org

Youtube Channel: www.tinyurl.com/mejz8dc
or youtube.com/channel/UCR75MHiRPlékPTLJ2GcXwZg

Contact for speaking: Joan@FaithOnEarth.org

Other books by your sister: *A Thorn in My Flesh*
Mysteries of the Ancient Word

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Recommended Films

- The Bible Dir: John Huston/ Genesis
- The Ten Commandments Dir: Cecil B. DeMille
- Follow Me story of Yoni Netanyahu
- The Jesus Film Book of Luke
- The Gospel of John Dir: Philip Saville
- The Hiding Place story of Corrie Ten Boom
with Jeannette Clift, Julie Harris
- Life Is Beautiful by Roberto Benigni
holocaust survivor
- Orchestra of Exiles doc/ Israel's first orchestra
- Exodus Dir: Otto Preminger
novel to film/ regaining the nation
- God's Outlaw story of William Tyndale
- Against All Odds: Israel Survives 9-hour epic
documentary of miracles
- A Woman Called Golda with Ingrid Bergman
- Judgment at Nuremberg..... with Spencer Tracy,
Burt Lancaster, all star cast
- Six Days in June doc/ Dir: Levi Eshcol
- Wallenberg A Hero's Story with Richard Chamberlain
- Winston Churchill: Walking with Destiny documentary

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- The Cross: the story of Arthur Blessitt Dir: Matt Crouch
- The Hope : The Rebirth of Israel by CBN Films
- The Boy in the Striped Pajamas a Miramax film
- Israel Inside Israel's contributions to the world
- The Miracle of Israel by Jewish Voice Ministries
- Nicky's Family..... documentary of a righteous gentile
- The Lady in Number Six interview/ oldest holocaust
survivor at 109 years old
- Forgiving Dr. Mengele interview of survivor twin
- The Danish Solution The rescue of Jews during WWII
- The Impossible Spy A true story/ Israeli hero
- Amish Grace based on true story of forgiveness
- The Case for Christ Lee Strobel/evidence for Jesus
- Expelled Ben Stein investigates evolution
- The Rabbi Who Found Messiah: by WND Films
The Story of Yitsach Kaduri and His Prophecies
- Above and Beyond Israel's first air force
- My Italian Secret Rescuing the Jews
- A Lamp in the Dark Adullum Films

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Although some online references might become obsolete as time passes, the hour is already late. The preceding references are among the most comprehensive and interesting of many available online.

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