

Letter Six - Israel according to the scriptures

One of the greatest assumptions in modern Christianity may also be one of the least examined—until recent events have forced it into the open, revealing how deeply our theology is intertwined with culture, politics, and unexamined assumptions. With the rising tensions, conflicts, and global focus surrounding Israel, Iran, and the Middle East, questions that were once avoided are now being confronted. Accusations, labels, and implications—particularly around what is considered antisemitic—have further complicated the conversation, often discouraging honest biblical examination. Yet in the midst of all this, the question remains: **What does Scripture actually say?**

Few subjects in modern Christianity carry more influence, emotion, and unquestioned loyalty than Israel. Entire theological systems, political alignments, and financial commitments have been built upon what is assumed to be a clear biblical mandate. Yet it is precisely because of this influence that the question must be asked—**have we understood Israel according to the Scriptures, or according to a framework we have inherited?**

For many, this issue is not merely theological—it is deeply personal. It shapes how Scripture is read, how prophecy is interpreted, and how allegiance is expressed in both the ecclesia and the world. But **Scripture does not call us to defend inherited assumptions—it calls us to examine all things in the light of Christ (Colossians 2:8).**

The purpose of this letter is not to provoke offense, but to pursue clarity. Not to attack people, but to examine doctrine. Not to divide the body, but to call it back to truth.

Because if we misunderstand who Israel is, we risk misunderstanding the nature of God's covenant, the identity of His people, and the mission of His kingdom.

This is not a secondary issue. It is foundational.

The power of this parable lies in the conclusion that Jesus Himself draws. After telling the story, He asks the religious leaders what the owner of the vineyard will do to those tenants who abused the servants and killed the son. They answer correctly: **the owner will bring those wicked tenants to a miserable end and lease the vineyard to others who will produce its fruit (Matthew 21:40–41).**

In Matthew 21:33-44 (Parable of the Vineyard), Jesus delivers a prophetic indictment against Israel's unfaithful leaders:

“Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. Again, he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, They will

respect my son. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.’ They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes? They answered^l him, “He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times.” Jesus said to them, “Did you never read in the scriptures”?

“The **stone that the builders rejected** has **become the cornerstone**; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes”?

Therefore, I say to you, **the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit.** [The one who falls on this stone will be dashed to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.]”

Jesus then makes the meaning unmistakably clear:

“Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruit.” (Matthew 21:43) This statement is profound. Jesus is speaking directly to the chief priests and Pharisees—the very leaders entrusted with the stewardship of God’s covenant people. The issue was not ethnicity, lineage, or heritage—it was stewardship and response to the Son.

The vineyard had been entrusted to them, yet they rejected the prophets and now stood in rejection of the Son Himself. Because of this, Jesus declares that the kingdom would be taken from them and entrusted to another people—defined not by bloodline, but by fruitfulness.

He reinforces this by quoting Psalm 118:22 **“The stone which the builders rejected, This has become the chief cornerstone.” (Matthew 21:42)** The builders—the leaders of Israel—rejected the very stone chosen by God. **Yet that rejected stone becomes the foundation of something new that God Himself is building.**

The kingdom is not abolished—it is transferred. Not destroyed—but entrusted anew. Not based on heritage—but on relationship to the Son and the fruit that follows. The defining mark of God’s people is not who they descend from—but whether they receive the Son and bear His fruit.

Romans 2:28–29 — A Jew Inwardly

What Jesus introduces in principle, the apostle Paul makes explicit in doctrine.

In Romans 2:28–29, Paul addresses the very question of identity:

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from people, but from God.”

Here, Paul makes a distinction that would have been both radical and unmistakable to his audience. He separates **external identity** from **true covenant identity**.

To be a Jew, in the fullest biblical sense, is no longer defined by outward markers—ethnicity, lineage, or adherence to the law—but by an inward work of the Spirit. Circumcision itself, once the defining sign of the covenant, is now redefined as something spiritual, not physical.

This is not a dismissal of Israel's history, but a clarification of its fulfillment. The covenant was always pointing beyond external forms to an internal transformation—a people marked not merely by descent, but by devotion; not by the flesh, but by the Spirit.

Paul is not introducing a new idea—he is confirming what Jesus had already declared. The kingdom is entrusted not on the basis of heritage, but on the basis of response to God. The true people of God are those whose hearts have been transformed by the Spirit and who live in alignment with Him.

The question is no longer, “Who is outwardly identified with Israel?”

The question is, “Who has been inwardly transformed by the Spirit?”

God's covenant people are not recognized by lineage—but by regeneration.

Galatians 3:16, 26–29 — The Seed and the Heirs

“Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as referring to many, but rather to one, ‘And to your seed,’ that is, Christ.” (Galatians 3:16)

And then: “For 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, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.” (Galatians 3:26–29)

Paul addresses the foundation of covenant inheritance—the promise made to Abraham. Here, Paul brings clarity to something that is often assumed but rarely examined carefully—the nature of Abraham's promise.

The promise was not ultimately made to a physical nation as an end, but to a **seed**—and Paul identifies that seed explicitly as Christ. This is critical. The inheritance does not flow through ethnicity alone, but through **union with the One to whom the promise was made**.

This means that the determining factor is not physical descent from Abraham, but whether one belongs to Christ. Paul then removes all distinction as a basis for covenant identity in Christ, in His kingdom, there is neither Jew or Greek, slave or free nor male or female.

These distinctions remain in the natural world, but they no longer define **covenant standing before God**. What defines the people of God is this: **“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants.”**

This is a complete re-centering of identity. The promise is not broadened to include Christ—it is **fulfilled in Him**, and only those who are in Him share in that inheritance. Apart from Christ, there is no claim to Abraham—**only through Christ is the promise inherited**.

Galatians 4

Example of Hagar and Sarah

Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, “Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.”

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.” So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Paul explicitly states that **the present Jerusalem—the one tied to the Sinai covenant—is associated with slavery, not inheritance**. This would have been a startling claim, especially to those who assumed that physical connection to Jerusalem secured covenant standing.

In contrast, Paul points to a different reality: “The Jerusalem above... she is our mother.” This shift in Paul’s letter shifts the focus entirely; from earthly to heavenly, from physical to spiritual and from law to promise.

The defining question is no longer: “Where are you from?” but: “Which covenant do you belong to?”

Are Jews the Children of Promise (Covenant of Grace) or Children of the Flesh (Mosaic Covenant). Apart from Christ they are under the Mosaic Law. Paul continues: **“Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise.” (v.28)** And then: **“But just as at**

that time the one born according to the flesh persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so it is now also.” (v.29)

Paul concludes with a decisive instruction: **“Drive out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.” (v.30)**

This is not about people groups—it is about **covenant systems**.

The covenant of law cannot inherit alongside the covenant of promise. The inheritance belongs exclusively to those who are in the line of promise—those who belong to Christ.

So to reiterate, there are two covenants, not one continuous system. The present Jerusalem are under the law (Mosaic) and is not the source of inheritance. It is the Jerusalem above that are the mother of God’s promise not the earthly Jerusalem. The inheritance in Christ belongs to the children of promise. Identity is determined by covenant alignment not ethnicity.

The issue is not who claims Abraham—but who belongs to the promise. To remain in the covenant of law is to remain outside the inheritance of promise.

Romans 9:6–8 “They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel...”

“It is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.”

So here Paul makes a distinction - there are **two Israels: Physical Israel** (descended from Abraham) and **True Israel** (children of promise). **Ethnic Israel does not equal covenant Israel.**

Roman 9 – 11 is a continuous argument and not segmented. Romans 11: 26 states that all Israel shall be saved. In Romans 9-11 – Paul is speaking the Jews of his time.

Romans 11 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” “This is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”

Taken out of context, this verse has been used to support the idea of a future national salvation of Israel. But Paul is not introducing a new doctrine—he is defending the same truth he has already established: not all who are descended from Israel are Israel, and only those who come through faith in Christ are counted among the people of God.

Paul laments in **Romans 9:3 “For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”** Ethnic

identity does not guarantee salvation. So Paul is proving that Jews apart from Christ will not be saved.

Paul's opening words in Romans 9 further reinforce this distinction. He expresses deep anguish for his "kinsmen according to the flesh," **even stating that he could wish himself accursed and cut off from Christ for their sake (Romans 9:3)**. This is a remarkable and sobering statement. His grief would make little sense if covenant identity—and therefore salvation—were secured by ethnicity alone. Instead, it reveals that many of his fellow Jews, though physically descended from Abraham, were outside the saving promise because of their rejection of Christ.

This sets the stage for his clarification in the following verses: **"They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel" (Romans 9:6)**. The issue is not lineage, but participation in the promise. The true children of God are not defined by the flesh, but by faith.

Paul's sorrow exposes the reality: proximity to the covenant is not the same as participation in it.

Paul reiterates in **Romans 10: 2-3** **"For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge." "For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God."**

This is critical to understand the statement made in Romans 11:26. **The problem is not effort—it is misplaced reliance**. They sought righteousness through the law rather than receiving it through faith.

Coming back to Romans 11, Paul continues:

"A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved..." (Romans 11:25–26)

This statement must be understood within the flow of Paul's argument. The hardening of Israel is **partial**, not total—meaning that even within Israel there remains a remnant who believe. At the same time, the gospel is going out to the Gentiles, bringing them into the covenant through faith.

The phrase "fullness of the Gentiles" does not point to a single future moment, but to the ongoing inclusion of the nations into the people of God through the preaching of the gospel. As Gentiles are grafted in by faith, and as Jews likewise are grafted back in through faith (Romans 11:23), the result is one unified people of God.

Therefore, "all Israel will be saved" is not a statement of ethnic guarantee, but a declaration of covenant fulfillment—the complete people of God, composed of all who are in Christ. As Paul has already established, **"they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel"**

(Romans 9:6), and “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek” (Romans 10:12).

The covenant promise is fulfilled not through lineage, but through the removal of sin in Christ: **“This is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.” (Romans 11:27)**

“All Israel” is not defined by birth—but by redemption.

The promise is not awaiting fulfillment—it is fulfilled in Christ and received by those who believe.

The True Jerusalem –

Hebrews 12: 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

The writer of Hebrews brings the argument to its decisive conclusion—not by pointing forward to something yet to come, but by declaring a present reality for those who are in Christ. He writes, **“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...” (Hebrews 12:22)**. This is not future language. It is not a promise waiting to be fulfilled. It is a statement of what is already true for the people of God.

This is critical. The believer is not oriented toward an earthly destination, nor waiting for access to a future city. Through Christ, we have already been brought into the reality of what that city represents. The contrast the writer establishes is unmistakable. Under the old covenant, the people gathered at Mount Sinai—an earthly mountain marked by fear, distance, and the law. But now, under the new covenant, the people of God are gathered to Mount Zion—the heavenly Jerusalem—where access is granted, not through law, but through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

This shift is not merely symbolic—it is covenantal. The center of God’s people is no longer defined by geography, but by relationship to Christ. The “city of the living God” is not located in a physical place that can be mapped or claimed. It is the dwelling place of a people who are united to Christ, enrolled in heaven, and gathered as the assembly of the firstborn.

The writer continues by describing this assembly: **angels in festal gathering, the ecclesia of the firstborn, God the Judge of all, the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and Jesus Himself—the mediator of a new covenant**. This is the reality into which every believer has entered. Not partially. Not progressively. But positionally and covenantally through Christ.

This confirms what has been established throughout the Scriptures. The true Jerusalem is not earthly, but heavenly. The true people of God are not defined by lineage, but by life in the Son. The promises of God are not tied to a location, but fulfilled in a person.

The question, then, is no longer where Jerusalem is—but **which Jerusalem we belong to. For those who are in Christ, the answer is already given: we have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.**

The people of God are not waiting to arrive—they have already come.

Next: Satan's Little Season and the 2nd Coming