
THE
ELEPHANT
IN THE
ROOM
How the Apostles Read
Israel's Promises After Christ Came
RICK SIMONI
THE OVERCOMER PRESS
A TOP Publication

THE FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST SERIES

# The Elephant in the Room

*How the Apostles Read Israel's Promises After Christ Came*

**Rick Simoni**

A TOP Publication
A publishing ministry of The Overcomer Magazine
theovercomer.org
First edition | 2026

# Copyright

Copyright © 2026 Rick Simoni. All rights reserved.

Published by The Overcomer Press (TOP)
A publishing ministry of The Overcomer Magazine
theovercomer.org

First edition, 2026.

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Holy Bible. The King James Version is in the public domain in the United States.

This book is a theological examination of covenant, kingdom, prophecy, and fulfillment in Jesus Christ. It is not a political program for or against any modern state, and it should not be read as a judgment upon the salvation, motives, or character of every Christian who holds a different eschatological view.

**Free Distribution Permission**

Permission is granted to download this PDF, print copies for personal or ministry use, and share the complete PDF freely with others, provided that it is distributed without charge, in its original and unaltered form, with the cover, copyright notice, author's name, and publisher information intact.

This permission does not authorize anyone to sell the PDF; modify, abridge, or repackage the work; remove its attribution; claim authorship; or reprint or republish the work, in whole or in substantial part, as part of another book, periodical, course, collection, or publication without prior written permission from The Overcomer Press.

Brief quotations may be used in reviews, articles, teaching materials, or scholarly discussion with proper attribution. Linking to the official PDF at theovercomer.org is welcomed.

Cover art and design copyright © 2026 The Overcomer Press.

# Contents

About This Book iv

How This Book Reads Scripture v

Introduction vii

Part I — How the Apostles Read the Throne 1

Part II — Seed, City, Temple, and Priesthood 7

Part III — One People and the Promise of Restoration 18

Part IV — All Israel Shall Be Saved 25

Part V — The Temple, the Millennium, and the End of the Shadows 33

A Pastoral Word 47

Glossary 48

Scripture Index 51

Subject Index 53

About the Author 54

Companion Book: Flesh and Spirit 55

# About This Book

The Elephant in the Room asks a question that is prior to every modern prophecy chart: How did the apostles themselves read Israel's promises after Jesus Christ had come? The concern of this book is not the worth of Jewish people, the safety of any population, or the prudence of any modern government. Those are different questions. The concern here is the interpretation of Scripture and the place of Jesus Christ in the promises of God.

The central contention is simple: the apostles do not read the promises as though Christ were an interruption in Israel's story. They proclaim Him as the One in whom that story reaches its purpose. The Son of David is enthroned. The Seed is Christ. The inheritance expands. The temple reaches Christ and His people. The priesthood has changed. Jew and Gentile are reconciled in one body by the cross.

This is not a claim that God has discarded Jewish people, nor does it deny the possibility of a future, widespread turning of ethnic Israel to Christ. Romans 11 forbids Gentile boasting and holds out real hope for the natural branches. Yet that hope is not a second covenant, a different gospel, or salvation through ancestry. It is mercy in Jesus Christ, the same mercy by which Gentiles stand.

# How This Book Reads Scripture

The Old Testament is the Word of God. Its covenants, promises, histories, sacrifices, priesthood, feasts, land, city, and kingdom were not mistakes to be discarded. They were divinely given realities. Yet they were also preparatory. Their full meaning is not reached by stopping before Christ, but by following them to Christ.

The apostles teach us how to read the earlier Scriptures after the death, resurrection, exaltation, and outpouring of the Spirit. Peter interprets the oath to David through the resurrection and enthronement of Jesus. Paul identifies Christ as the promised Seed and all who belong to Him as heirs. Hebrews explains that the priesthood has changed and Christ's offering is once for all. James declares that the gathering of the Gentiles agrees with Amos's promise concerning David's fallen tabernacle.

This method is not arbitrary spiritualization. We begin with a passage in its historical setting, follow its development through Scripture, and receive the inspired explanation given after Christ has come. The shadow is not despised; it is understood by the Substance. The promise is not cancelled; it is enlarged and secured in the Son of God.

This book does not attempt a verse-by-verse inventory of every restoration oracle in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or Zechariah. Passages such as Isaiah 2 and 60-66, Jeremiah 31, and Zechariah 12-14 remain important and deserve careful study. The narrower purpose here is to establish the controlling apostolic movements by which such passages must subsequently be read. The same method applies to them: begin in their historical setting, follow their development through Scripture, and receive the inspired interpretation given after Christ has come.

Nor does spiritual mean unreal or nonphysical. Christ rose bodily, will return visibly, and will raise the dead. Creation will

be delivered from corruption. The future can enlarge the Substance; it cannot dethrone it in favor of the shadow.

Where details remain open, settled apostolic truths provide the boundaries: the Son of David is enthroned; Jesus is the saving Seed and Heir; Jew and Gentile are reconciled in one body; the priesthood has changed; Christ's offering is final; no one is grafted into the people of God apart from faith; and any future mercy toward ethnic Israel brings the natural branches into Christ, not around Him.

# Introduction

## How the Apostles Read Israel's Promises After Christ Came

There is an elephant in the room whenever Christians discuss Israel, Jerusalem, Bible prophecy, and the return of Jesus Christ.

We are often told that the Old Testament requires a future restoration of Israel as a distinct national people in the land, Jerusalem as the governmental center of Messiah's kingdom, a restored temple and priestly order, and the Son of David personally reigning from earthly Jerusalem. In many prophetic systems these are not minor details. They become essential for understanding the last days.

But before we ask how Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, or Amos should be fitted into such a system, there is a prior question: **How did the apostles themselves read those prophets after Jesus Christ had come?**

That is the question this book follows.

The issue is not simply that the apostles fail to give us a modern prophecy chart. An argument from silence can only take us so far. The stronger argument is positive. When the apostles open the Scriptures concerning David, Abraham, Zion, the temple, the priesthood, the covenant, and the kingdom, they repeatedly interpret those promises through the death, resurrection, ascension, and present reign of Jesus Christ.

**The New Testament does not disappear when we open the prophets. It teaches us how to read them.**

This book does not attempt a complete eschatology. It does not choose a camp on Revelation 20. It does not deny a future as

large as resurrection, judgment, and a new heavens and a new earth. It asks a narrower question: **Do the apostles teach that the climax of redemption requires a return to the shadows that anticipated Christ?**

The five parts follow a deliberate progression. We begin with the throne, then follow the apostles through Israel's great covenant promises and institutions. From there, we examine the promise of restoration, Paul's teaching concerning Israel, and finally the temple and the millennium. Each part builds upon the apostolic interpretation established in those preceding it.

Begin where the apostles begin. Let the difficult texts speak. And ask whether any of them requires God to move from Christ back to the forms that pointed to Him.

Paul gives the simplest statement of the whole principle:

> For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.
> — 2 Corinthians 1:20

**In Him. Not around Him. Not beside Him. Not back behind Him.**

**The prophetic hope does not terminate in the restoration of the shadows. It terminates in Jesus Christ.**

PART I

# How the Apostles Read the Throne

The Introduction has already stated the governing question. We begin with the first and most basic issue: the throne. Before asking what future manifestations of the kingdom may remain, we need to hear how the apostles speak of the Son of David after His resurrection and ascension.

Acts 1 does not settle every question. But once Pentecost comes, Spirit-filled apostles begin interpreting Israel's Scriptures publicly. Their starting point is not a throne still waiting for its King, but a risen and exalted Messiah.

## The Question Before Pentecost

Immediately before His ascension, the disciples asked Jesus:

> Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?
> — Acts 1:6

That question should not be brushed aside. These men knew the prophets. They knew the promises concerning David, Israel, Jerusalem, and the kingdom. Even after the resurrection, they were still asking about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel.

Jesus answered:

> It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.
> But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me...
> — Acts 1:7-8

We should be careful not to make Jesus say more than He says. He does not there give the disciples a detailed correction of every

assumption behind their question. Neither does He explain the nature of Israel's future in that passage. He redirects their concern from the timing of the kingdom to the coming of the Holy Ghost and their worldwide witness to Him.

Acts 1 by itself does not settle the matter. What happens next is more important. Pentecost comes. The Holy Ghost is poured out. The apostles begin publicly interpreting Israel's Scriptures in the light of the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Now we are not merely listening to disciples asking questions. We are hearing Spirit-filled apostles explain the prophets. And that is where the pattern begins to emerge.

## Peter and David's Throne

Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost ought to have a central place in any discussion of the kingdom. Speaking of David, Peter says:

> Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, **he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne**;
> He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ...
> — Acts 2:30-31

Peter then continues:

> This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.
> Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted...
> — Acts 2:32-33

And then he quotes Psalm 110:

> The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
> Until I make thy foes thy footstool.
> — Acts 2:34-35

The connection is difficult to miss. David received a promise concerning his Seed. Peter says David was a prophet. Peter then connects that promise directly to the resurrection of Christ and His exaltation to the right hand of God.

This is where we need to be precise. A premillennial reader may readily agree that Christ is presently exalted at the Father's right hand while maintaining that the Davidic kingdom will later receive an earthly manifestation in Jerusalem. That position should be acknowledged fairly. Acts 2 does not, by itself, answer every question concerning the final manifestation of Christ's reign. But it does create a significant difficulty for the idea that David's throne remains prophetically vacant until Christ returns.

Peter does not describe the resurrection merely as something qualifying Jesus to sit upon David's throne at some later date. His words connect God's oath to David with raising Christ up "to sit on his throne." And Peter's conclusion is not postponed to another age:

> Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, **both Lord and Christ**.
> — Acts 2:36

The Son of David has been raised. The Son of David has been exalted. The Son of David is Lord and Christ. Whatever further manifestation of His reign the future may contain, Peter does not present Jesus as a King waiting for a later coronation. **He presents an already enthroned King.**

## He Must Reign

Paul speaks with the same present certainty. Writing about the resurrection and the ultimate defeat of Christ's enemies, he says:

> For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.
> The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.
> — 1 Corinthians 15:25-26

The order matters. Christ reigns until His enemies are subdued. The final enemy is death. That means the resurrection of the dead does not mark the beginning of Christ's kingship. It belongs to the consummation of a reign already underway.

Paul does not say, "He must someday begin to reign." He says, **"He must reign, till..."** The reign is already in progress. The enemies remain. Death remains. But the King is not absent from His throne while He waits for history to catch up. He reigns while His enemies are being placed beneath His feet.

That is exactly the language of Psalm 110—the same Psalm Peter used at Pentecost:

> The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
> — Psalm 110:1

The apostles do not treat that heavenly session as a waiting room before the real kingdom begins. They treat it as the present reign of the Messiah.

## Raised, Seated, and Far Above

Paul makes the point even more clearly in Ephesians. Speaking of the mighty power of God, he writes that God

> wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,
> Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named...
> — Ephesians 1:20-21

Notice again the movement. Resurrection. Exaltation. Enthronement. Authority. Christ is not merely honored in heaven while another stage of kingship waits to begin. He is seated **far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.** Paul continues:

> And hath put all things under his feet...
> — Ephesians 1:22

The language comes again from the Old Testament. The apostles are not abandoning Israel's Scriptures. They are telling us where those Scriptures have led. The Messiah has been exalted above

every competing authority. His reign is not merely future. It is present.

## Hebrews Says the Same Thing

The book of Hebrews repeatedly returns to this same picture. Speaking of the Son, it says:

> when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.
> — Hebrews 1:3

Later:

> But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;
> From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.
> — Hebrews 10:12-13

Once again, Psalm 110 governs the apostolic understanding. Christ has sat down. He waits for His enemies to be made His footstool. But He does not wait to become King. **The waiting takes place from the throne.** That distinction matters.

The New Testament certainly looks forward. Christ will appear. The dead will rise. Judgment will come. The last enemy will be destroyed. Creation itself will be delivered from corruption. But the future hope begins with an already enthroned Christ. **The kingdom is moving toward consummation, not toward inauguration.**

## What, Then, Are We Waiting For?

This does not mean there is nothing left to happen. Far from it. The New Testament hope is enormous. Christ shall return. The dead shall be raised. The saints shall be glorified. Every enemy shall be subdued. Death itself shall be destroyed. Creation shall be delivered from corruption. The kingdom that is already

present under the reign of Christ will reach its full and open manifestation.

But that is very different from saying that Jesus is not yet reigning as the promised Son of David. The apostles do not speak of the ascension as though Christ has merely gone away until His real kingship can begin later. They speak of Him as Lord now. They speak of Him as Christ now. They speak of Him as seated now. They speak of Him as far above all principality and power now. They speak of Him as the One who must reign until every enemy is beneath His feet.

That should shape the way we read every Old Testament promise concerning the throne.

## The Elephant in the Room

And so we return to the question with which we began. How did the apostles read the throne after Christ came?

They did not present David's throne as an empty chair waiting in Jerusalem for the Messiah to occupy it someday. They connected David's promise to Christ's resurrection. They connected His resurrection to His exaltation. They connected His exaltation to Psalm 110. They declared Him Lord and Christ. They proclaimed Him seated at the right hand of God. They declared Him far above all principality, power, might, and dominion. And they said:

> For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

Whatever debates remain concerning the future—and there are real ones—the apostolic starting point is clear. **The Son of David is already enthroned.** That does not remove the future. It tells us who rules while we await it.

And it gives us the first rule for interpreting Israel's prophetic promises after Christ came: **Begin where the apostles begin—not with a throne still waiting for its King, but with the risen King already upon His throne.**

PART II

# Seed, City, Temple, and Priesthood

With the throne established, the argument moves to Israel's great covenant forms. If Christ is already the enthroned Son of David, how do the apostles treat Abraham's Seed, the inheritance, Jerusalem, the temple, and the priesthood?

The question is not whether those forms mattered. They did. The question is whether the apostles direct us back to them as the final reality, or through them to the greater fulfillment revealed in Christ.

## Abraham's Seed

Paul's treatment of Abraham is one of the clearest examples.

He writes:

> Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.
> — Galatians 3:16

That is a remarkable statement. Whatever else we say about the promises made to Abraham, Paul insists that they reach their center in a Person: the promised Seed is Christ. That does not mean Abraham has been discarded or that Israel's history was a mistake. It means the promise was always moving toward Christ.

And Paul does not stop there.

He tells those who belong to Christ:

> And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
> — Galatians 3:29

Paul does not tell Gentile believers that they have become a second people alongside Abraham's seed. He tells them that if they belong to Christ, they are Abraham's seed because they are in the promised Seed. That is not Gentiles stealing Israel's promises; it is the promise reaching the One toward whom it was always moving, and all who are joined to Him share in what belongs to Him.

## From the Land to the World

Paul does something equally striking with the inheritance.

He writes:

> For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.
> — Romans 4:13

The language matters. Paul does not say Abraham's inheritance has disappeared; he enlarges it. The trajectory is not from Canaan to nothing but from the land to the world. The promise has not become smaller because Christ has come. It has become greater.

When Christians hear that an Old Testament promise finds its fulfillment in Christ, some immediately assume something has been taken away. The promise has been "spiritualized." The concrete reality has vanished.

But Paul's movement is exactly the opposite. The fulfillment exceeds the shadow, the inheritance expands, and what was revealed within the boundaries of a particular land opens outward until Abraham is described as heir of the world. That is not cancellation; it is fulfillment overflowing its earlier form.

## Jerusalem Above

The same apostolic movement appears when Paul speaks about Jerusalem.

In Galatians he contrasts:

> Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children

with:

> But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.
> — Galatians 4:25-26

Paul is not embarrassed by Jerusalem. He does not erase its history or deny its importance in the purposes of God. But neither does he leave our eyes fixed upon the earthly city as though nothing greater has appeared. He points upward.

The writer of Hebrews does the same thing:

> But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...
> — Hebrews 12:22

“Ye are come.” This is not merely a city believers might encounter someday. Something has already happened through Christ: they have come to Mount Sion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem. The movement is not from reality back to pattern but from earthly pattern to greater reality. Jerusalem has not become meaningless; its meaning has opened up. The earthly city belonged to the story, and the heavenly city is where that story was pointing.

## The Temple Has Become a Person

The temple follows the same pattern.

Jesus Himself begins the transition.

When He says:

> Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

John immediately explains:

> But he spake of the temple of his body.
> — John 2:19, 21

Think about what Jesus has done.

He has taken one of the central institutions of Israel's covenant life—the place where God dwelt among His people—and identified its ultimate reality with Himself.

The temple was not meaningless.

It was pointing somewhere.

It was pointing to Christ.

The presence of God was no longer to be understood primarily in relation to a building made with hands.

God had come among His people in His Son.

## And Then the Temple Becomes a People

The apostles carry that truth forward.

Paul writes:

> Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?
> — 1 Corinthians 3:16

And again:

> In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:
> In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.
> — Ephesians 2:21-22

Peter says the same thing in different words:

> Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood...
> — 1 Peter 2:5

This is not accidental language. Jesus identifies Himself as the Temple, and then those united to Him become the dwelling place of God through the Spirit. The temple has moved from stone to Christ, and from Christ to a people who share His life. That does not mean the old temple never mattered; it means we now know what it was for: a shadow of Emmanuel—God with us, and then, through the Spirit, God in us.

## The Priesthood Is Changed

Hebrews makes the movement even more explicit when it turns to the priesthood.

The writer says:

> For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.
> — Hebrews 7:12

That is stronger than saying the Levitical priesthood has been placed on hold.

It has been **changed**.

And Christ possesses:

> an unchangeable priesthood.
> — Hebrews 7:24

Then Hebrews says concerning His sacrifice:

> For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.
> — Hebrews 10:14

Those words establish an important boundary around every later discussion of prophecy.

We are not yet asking whether Ezekiel's temple vision is symbolic or literal.

We are saying something more basic:

**No reading of Ezekiel may undo what Hebrews says the priesthood and the offering have become in Christ.**

Whatever we eventually conclude about Ezekiel 40-48—and that question deserves careful treatment—the apostolic movement is not **Levi, then Christ, then Levi again**.

It is shadow to Substance, temporary to permanent, repeated sacrifices to one offering forever.

Paul gives us an illuminating analogy of that order when he speaks of resurrection:

> Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.
> — 1 Corinthians 15:46

First the natural, then the spiritual.

He does not say first the natural, then the spiritual, then the natural again.

Paul is speaking here about the body, not about Levi, the temple, or the priesthood. We are not using the verse as a proof-text for those things, but as an analogy of the direction we have already seen in Hebrews: **from the temporary form to the greater reality it anticipated.**

Any interpretation of future prophecy must honor that movement.

## Why Would Fulfillment Move Backward?

This is where an important question begins to emerge.

If the temple reaches its fulfillment in Christ and His people, and if the Levitical priesthood gives way to Christ's unchangeable priesthood, and if repeated sacrifices give way to one offering

forever, what would it mean for prophetic fulfillment to require a return to the earlier forms?

This is not yet an argument about every detail in Ezekiel; we will come to Ezekiel. But Hebrews has already told us something we cannot forget when we get there. The old order was not merely interrupted; it was surpassed. Christ did not arrive as one priest among many but brought the former priesthood to its intended goal. His sacrifice is not one sacrifice added to the others; it is the offering to which they pointed. The movement is not from shadow to Substance and then back to shadow again.

## David's Fallen Tabernacle and the Gentiles

Acts 15 gives us another important example of how the apostles read Israel's prophets after Christ came.

The early Church is dealing with a question that could hardly have been more important: What is God doing with the Gentiles?

Peter has already testified that God gave the Holy Ghost to Gentiles.

Paul and Barnabas have testified to the work of God among the nations.

Then James stands and says:

> Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.
> — Acts 15:14

Then he adds:

> And to this agree the words of the prophets...
> — Acts 15:15

And James quotes Amos:

> After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down...
> — Acts 15:16

This passage needs to be handled carefully. James does not settle every clause of Amos 9, which continues with Edom, rebuilding, planting, abundance, and Israel dwelling securely. Those words deserve consideration. We should neither cut Amos off once James has made the point we wanted nor make James say less than he says.

James looks at God gathering Gentiles into a people for His name and declares:

> **And to this agree the words of the prophets.**

James's conclusion is decisive for the point before him.

He does not treat Amos as though the prophet has nothing to do with what God is presently doing among the Gentiles.

He does not say, "That belongs entirely to another age."

He sees agreement between Amos's promised restoration and the gathering of the nations taking place before his eyes.

Whatever remains to be said about the timing of every detail in Amos 9, the restoration promised by Amos cannot be interpreted apart from what God is presently doing through Christ among the nations.

Acts 15 therefore establishes the **Christological and Gentile-inclusive trajectory of Amos more decisively than it establishes the timing of every element in Amos 9.**

That careful distinction lets James say exactly what he says without forcing him to answer questions he was not addressing.

James does not tell us that the remaining images in Amos—Edom, planting, security, possession, and abundance—are thereby cancelled, nor does he provide a timetable for every clause of the oracle. What he does establish is that Davidic restoration cannot be read as a Gentile-excluding, Christ-delaying program. The present gathering of the nations in Christ already belongs inside the prophet's horizon.

## The Direction Is Consistent

By now the pattern should be becoming clear.

Abraham's Seed reaches Christ.

The inheritance expands to the world.

Jerusalem reaches its greater reality in the Jerusalem above.

The temple reaches its reality in Christ and His people.

The Levitical priesthood gives way to the unchangeable priesthood of Christ.

Repeated sacrifices give way to one offering forever.

And when James reaches for Amos to understand the restoration of David's fallen tabernacle, he finds the gathering of the Gentiles agreeing with the prophet.

This is not a collection of unrelated verses.

There is a direction to apostolic interpretation.

The apostles consistently move from **promise to fulfillment**, from **shadow to Substance**, from **earthly pattern to the greater reality revealed in Christ**.

That does not mean every earthly thing disappears.

It does not mean creation no longer matters.

It does not mean the body no longer matters.

It does not mean history no longer matters.

Christianity does not end in a ghostly heaven.

Christ will return.

The dead will rise.

Creation will be renewed.

The point is something different.

**Fulfillment does not require God to reverse the redemptive movement He has already revealed in Christ.**

## This Is Not Making the Promises Less Real

Someone may still object that this is simply "spiritualizing" the Old Testament.

But that objection assumes that the spiritual reality is somehow less real than the earthly shadow.

The apostles do not speak that way.

Is Christ less real than David?

Is the world a smaller inheritance than Canaan?

Is the heavenly Jerusalem less real than the earthly city?

Is Christ's body a lesser temple than Herod's stones?

Is an unchangeable priesthood inferior to Levi?

Is one sacrifice that perfects forever somehow less substantial than sacrifices that had to be offered again and again?

The fulfillment is not less because it is greater.

The Substance is not inferior to the shadow that anticipated it.

The shadow mattered precisely because something real was casting it.

And when the Reality arrives, we do not honor the shadow by pretending the Substance has not come.

## The Acorn Has Not Been Betrayed

This is why fulfillment should not be confused with replacement.

The promise is not abandoned when it reaches Christ.

It succeeds.

The type is not despised when the antitype appears.

Its purpose has been fulfilled.

**The acorn has not been betrayed by the oak.**

It has become what it was always moving toward.

That is why Paul can say:

> For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.
> — 2 Corinthians 1:20

**In Him. That is the apostolic center.**

In Him.

PART III

# One People and the Promise of Restoration

With the throne and the covenant forms established, the argument now turns to restoration. Peter speaks of "the restitution of all things." Gabriel promises the Son of David an everlasting reign over the house of Jacob. Jesus speaks of the Twelve judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Those texts matter. But before asking what they require of the future, we must begin with something the apostles say has already happened through the cross: Christ has made those who were far off and those who were nigh one in Himself.

## One New Man

Paul describes the former condition of the Gentiles plainly:

> Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh...
> That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:
> — Ephesians 2:11-12

That was their condition: separated, far off, strangers to the covenants of promise.

But then Paul gives us two of the most important words in the chapter:

> **But now** in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.
> — Ephesians 2:13

Something has changed.

And Paul tells us exactly what Christ has done:

> 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.
> — Ephesians 2:14-18

Paul could hardly make the point more strongly: both one, one new man, one body, one Spirit. The cross did not merely make salvation available to two separate covenant peoples traveling on parallel tracks. Christ made peace by joining those who were far off with those who were nigh in Himself. This does not erase Jewish ethnicity; Paul never stopped knowing who his "kinsmen according to the flesh" were. Romans 9-11 makes that abundantly clear. But ethnicity and covenant standing are not the same thing. The wall Christ destroyed was not replaced with another wall farther down the road. The apostolic movement is toward reconciliation in Christ.

## This Is Not Replacement

That is why the accusation of "replacement theology" can cloud the real issue.

The New Testament does not teach that Gentiles came along, pushed Israel aside, and stole Israel's promises.

Paul says something very different.

The promises reach their intended Seed:

> Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made... And to thy seed, which is Christ.
> — Galatians 3:16

And those who belong to Christ become heirs:

> And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
> — Galatians 3:29

The promise is not transferred from Israel to a Gentile institution. It reaches Christ, and in Christ believing Jew and believing Gentile inherit together. Israel is not discarded so that the Church may step into her place. Rather, the promise reaches the promised Seed, and those united to Him become fellow heirs. This is fulfillment, not theft.

## And the Future Is Still Glorious

None of this requires us to flatten the future into the present. Jesus Christ will return, the dead will rise, death will be destroyed, judgment will come, and creation will be delivered from corruption.

Peter writes:

> Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.
> — 2 Peter 3:13

The Christian hope is not an eternity of disembodied souls floating somewhere in heaven. It is resurrection, renewed creation, and the open triumph of Jesus Christ. So the question before us is not whether there is a future; there certainly is. The narrower question is whether future restoration requires God to reestablish the covenantal forms that Christ has already fulfilled and surpassed.

## What About "The Restitution of All Things"?

Acts 3 comes immediately after Pentecost.

Peter tells his hearers:

> Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;
> And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:
> Whom the heaven must receive until the times of **restitution of all things**, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.
> — Acts 3:19-21

That is substantial language. Peter speaks of Christ being received into heaven until the restitution of all things spoken by the prophets. We should not make that phrase smaller than Peter makes it; he is speaking of something enormous. A reader may point to the passage and say, "There it is. Israel's kingdom will be restored." But Peter does not define the restitution that way. He does not say Levi will return, the Mosaic covenant will be reinstated, Christ must still receive David's throne, or temple sacrifices will return. He says there will be a restitution of all things spoken by the prophets—a reality wider than any one national or ceremonial form.

And Peter immediately continues by returning to the promise made to Abraham:

> Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, **And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.**
> Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, **in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.**
> — Acts 3:25-26

Verses 25-26 do not exhaust the meaning of "the restitution of all things," but they do show where Peter's thought remains centered. God has raised His Son, the Abrahamic blessing is going forth, Israel receives the blessing first, and the blessing is

expressed in turning men from their iniquities. Christ is not outside prophetic restoration, waiting for another program to begin; He is at its center. Acts 3 certainly promises restoration, but restoration does not automatically mean the reinstatement of every former covenantal form. Hebrews, Ephesians 2, and Acts 2 still stand when we read Acts 3: the priesthood has been changed, the one new man has been created, and the Son of David is enthroned. Peter promises restoration. He does not promise regression.

## What About Luke 1 and the Throne of David?

Gabriel's words to Mary are unmistakably Davidic:

> 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 1:32-33

There is no reason to weaken those words. Jesus is the Son of David; David's throne belongs to Him; He reigns over the house of Jacob; His kingdom has no end. The question is not whether Luke 1 promises Davidic kingship, but when the New Testament says that kingship begins. Luke wrote both books. The same writer who records Gabriel's promise also records Peter saying that God swore to David that He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. Peter then connects that promise to the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. The promise that He shall "reign over the house of Jacob for ever" is not denied by His present enthronement. It is the everlasting reign of Israel's Messiah—the same Son whom Peter proclaims risen and enthroned—over the people gathered beneath His rule. A premillennial reader may still expect a future earthly manifestation of that reign; that is a separate question. Luke 1 does not require us to leave David's throne vacant until that day. The throne has its King already.

## What About the Twelve Tribes and Twelve Thrones?

Jesus tells the Twelve:

> Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, **judging the twelve tribes of Israel**.
> — Matthew 19:28

We should not explain this away. It is genuinely eschatological language: there is a regeneration, a future manifestation of the Son of man in glory, and a unique place of authority for the Twelve in relation to the twelve tribes of Israel.

But the regeneration honors Israel's names and the Twelve's office without telling us that the Mosaic covenant, Levitical priesthood, or sacrificial order must return. Revelation gives us a fitting picture of that continuity without separation:

> *and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel...*
> *— Revelation 21:12*

And then:

> *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*
> *— Revelation 21:14*

Twelve tribes. Twelve apostles. One city. Israel's names remain, and the apostolic names remain, but they are gathered into the same consummated dwelling of God.

The regeneration honors Israel's names and the Twelve's peculiar office without rebuilding the wall that Ephesians says Christ has broken down.

## Restoration Without Returning to the Old Order

We can now see why the word restoration must be handled carefully. In ordinary speech it often means putting something

back exactly as it was, but biblical fulfillment is not always restoration by repetition. David's throne is fulfilled in the risen Son of David; Abraham's inheritance opens to the world; the true Temple is Christ and His people; the priesthood is Christ's unchangeable priesthood; repeated sacrifices give way to one offering forever. So when Peter speaks of "the restitution of all things," we cannot simply assume that restoration means going backward to the earlier form. Sometimes restoration means bringing something to the fullness for which the earlier form existed. Christ does not destroy God's promises; He fills them full.

## The Question Romans 11 Must Answer

Romans 11 will not allow us to speak carelessly about Israel. Paul speaks of Israel's fall, diminishing, fullness, receiving, natural branches being grafted in again, and partial blindness lasting until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in.

Then he writes:

> And so all Israel shall be saved...
> — Romans 11:26

The question is not whether that language matters. It plainly does. The question is whether a future extraordinary mercy toward ethnic Israel would require the restoration of a separate Mosaic covenantal order, or whether Paul tells us that the natural branches return by being grafted into the same olive tree through faith.

The answer must come from Romans 11 itself.

PART IV

# All Israel Shall Be Saved

Romans 11 deserves to be heard on its own terms. Paul is speaking about his own people, his “kinsmen according to the flesh,” while holding fast to the same Christ-centered gospel he has proclaimed throughout Romans.

The question before us is precise: if Paul anticipates a future mercy toward ethnic Israel, what form does that mercy take? Does it create a second covenantal people, or does Paul describe the natural branches returning to the same olive tree through faith?

## Has God Cast Away His People?

Paul opens Romans 11 with the question:

> I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.
> God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.
> — Romans 11:1-2

Paul’s answer is emphatic: God forbid. God has not simply discarded Israel, and Paul himself is living proof—an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

And yet Paul immediately reminds us of Elijah and the remnant:

> Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.
> — Romans 11:5

God’s faithfulness to Israel has never depended upon every Israelite believing at the same moment. Even within Israel, there has been a remnant according to grace.

And Paul adds:

> And if by grace, then is it no more of works...
> — Romans 11:6

From the beginning of the chapter, the principle of restoration is already established: grace, not genealogy by itself, possession of the law, or national status apart from faith.

## Israel's Fall Is Not the End of the Story

Paul then asks:

> I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.
> — Romans 11:11

Again Paul says, "God forbid." Israel's stumbling is not presented as the final word. Salvation has gone to the Gentiles, yet Paul sees even that Gentile salvation as part of a larger purpose toward Israel: "for to provoke them to jealousy." When he contrasts Israel's fall and diminishing with their fullness, we should not explain the language away. Whatever Paul means by Israel's fullness, he has clearly not finished thinking about Israel after their stumbling.

## What Shall Their Receiving Be?

Paul goes further:

> For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, **but life from the dead?**
> — Romans 11:15

The language is large: their receiving, "life from the dead." Paul expects the reader to feel the weight of the contrast. Christians differ over whether the expression points closely to resurrection or to extraordinary blessing flowing from Israel's reception. Even on the largest reading—even if Paul intends resurrection-scale blessing—the phrase describes the consequence of Israel's receiving; it does not establish a separate saving economy for

Israel. Either way, Israel has not disappeared from God's concern. There is real hope in the chapter, and the olive tree shows us what that hope looks like.

## One Olive Tree

Paul changes metaphors.

He begins speaking of an olive tree:

> And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;
> Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.
> — Romans 11:17-18

This is one of the most important images in the entire discussion. Paul does not give us one Jewish olive tree and one Gentile olive tree; he gives us one tree. Some natural branches are broken off and wild branches are grafted in. Then he immediately warns the Gentiles, "Boast not against the branches." A Gentile theology that looks down upon unbelieving Jews has misunderstood Romans 11. The Gentiles do not support the root; the root supports them, and they stand only by faith.

## Why Were the Natural Branches Broken Off?

Paul anticipates the Gentile response:

> Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in.
> Well; **because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith.** Be not highminded, but fear:
> — Romans 11:19-20

There is the dividing line: not ethnicity, Gentile superiority, or Jewish inferiority, but unbelief and faith. The natural branches were broken off because of unbelief, while Gentiles stand by

faith. If the natural branches return, the thing that separated them must be removed: unbelief. Paul says exactly that.

## God Is Able to Graft Them In Again

Paul continues:

> And they also, **if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in**: for God is able to graff them in again.
> — Romans 11:23

This may be the decisive sentence for the question we are asking. Paul holds out real hope for the natural branches: God is able to graft them in again, "if they abide not still in unbelief." They are not restored apart from Christ, through another covenant, or merely by national existence. They are restored through the removal of unbelief and grafted into the same tree. Paul does not describe a second olive tree or a covenantal system operating parallel to the body of Christ. He describes natural branches returning to their own olive tree. That is restoration through faith.

## "How Much More Shall These… Be Graffed Into Their Own Olive Tree?"

Paul presses the point:

> For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree: **how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree?**
> — Romans 11:24

"Their own olive tree" is powerful language. Paul recognizes something proper and fitting about the natural branches being restored. Gentiles should never speak as though believing Jews are strangers entering a Gentile Church. The olive tree was theirs before Gentiles were grafted into it; the patriarchal promises were not Gentile promises; the Messiah came according to the

flesh from Israel; the covenants, promises, and fathers belonged historically to Israel. Paul erases none of that. Yet the restoration he describes is not the creation of a second tree. It is grafting into the one tree.

## Blindness in Part

Then Paul unveils what he calls a mystery:

> For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that **blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**
> — Romans 11:25

Several things should be kept together. The blindness is “in part,” never total; Paul, the remnant, and the earliest Jewish believers prove that. The word “until” naturally raises the question of what follows, which is one reason a future turning of ethnic Israel should be taken seriously. And the “fulness of the Gentiles” places Jew and Gentile within one unfolding redemptive purpose. The Gentile mission is not a detour unrelated to Israel, nor is Israel’s future mercy unrelated to the Gentiles. God’s purpose is moving toward fullness.

## “And So All Israel Shall Be Saved”

Then comes the famous sentence:

> And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:
> For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.
> — Romans 11:26-27

What does “all Israel” mean? Christians have answered in more than one way. Some understand the phrase as the full people of God gathered in Christ; others see a future large-scale salvation of ethnic Israel after the present period of partial blindness.

Serious arguments exist on both sides, and this book does not need to force a choice in order to answer its narrower question. If Paul means the complete covenant people of God in Christ, the one-people argument is straightforward. If he means a future large-scale conversion of ethnic Israel, Paul has already told us what that would mean: the natural branches cease abiding in unbelief and are grafted into their own olive tree through faith. Such salvation is not apart from Christ; it is Israel turning to her Messiah—and that would be glorious.

## Beloved for the Fathers' Sakes

Paul continues:

> As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, **they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.**
> — Romans 11:28

That verse should restrain Gentile arrogance forever. Paul still sees a real relationship between ethnic Israel and the patriarchal promises: they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. God has not forgotten Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. The history and the promises matter. Yet being beloved for the fathers' sakes does not grant salvation apart from the gospel. The same Paul who calls them beloved also says the natural branches were broken off through unbelief. God's covenant faithfulness toward the fathers is real, and salvation is still through Christ.

## The Gifts and Calling of God

Then Paul gives us the famous statement:

> For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.
> — Romans 11:29

God does not change His mind because history became difficult; He does not abandon His purposes or become unfaithful. But Romans 11 tells us how His faithfulness unfolds: through mercy,

through faith, through grafting in, through the Deliverer who turns ungodliness away from Jacob. God's faithfulness is not demonstrated by returning Israel to something smaller than Christ, but by bringing His promises to their appointed fulfillment in Him.

## Mercy Upon All

Paul then widens the lens:

> 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 11:30-32

This is where Paul is going: mercy. Gentiles did not earn their place, and Israel will not earn restoration. The arrangement shuts the door on boasting. No one comes by flesh, law, or national privilege alone. Jew and Gentile receive mercy, and that mercy has a name: Jesus Christ.

## A Future Mercy Is Not a Second Covenant

This is the distinction we must hold. A future turning of ethnic Israel to Christ is entirely compatible with the apostolic pattern and would beautifully display the mercy and faithfulness of God. But that is not the same as restoring Israel apart from the new covenant realities already established in Christ. Paul can anticipate Israel's fullness, receiving, the removal of partial blindness, natural branches grafted in again, and even say "all Israel shall be saved" without creating a second covenant people. The branches return to one olive tree, in harmony with Ephesians: one new man, one body, one Spirit. Future mercy fulfills the promises through the cross; it does not undo it.

## The Olive Tree Tells Us How Israel Comes Home

Romans 11 does not merely tell us that Israel may have a future; it tells us how Israel comes home. The natural branches return when unbelief gives way to faith, and Jew and Gentile together live from the same holy Root. If Paul anticipates a great future turning of Israel—and Romans 11 gives substantial reason to remain open to that hope—it will be the triumph of grace over unbelief: Israel beholding her Messiah, one olive tree, one Deliverer, one mercy.

That leaves one final question: can Ezekiel and Revelation require a movement from Christ back to Levi, from one offering forever back to repeated sacrifice, or from the true Temple back to stone?

PART V

# The Temple, the Millennium, and the End of the Shadows

The final movement of the argument brings Ezekiel 40-48, Hebrews 7-10, and Revelation 20-22 into the same room. Ezekiel gives us a temple, priests, sacrifices, land divisions, a river, and a restored city. Revelation speaks of saints reigning with Christ for a thousand years.

Nothing in the argument that follows requires the reader to adopt an amillennial reading of Revelation 20. A Christian may expect a future millennium and still deny that it requires the restoration of the Levitical order. The narrower question is whether these visions can reverse what the apostles say Christ has permanently accomplished.

The New Testament does not disappear when we open Ezekiel. It teaches us how to read him.

## What About Ezekiel's Temple?

Ezekiel's final vision is extraordinarily detailed.

A man measures the temple.

There are gates and courts.

There is an altar.

There are sons of Zadok serving as priests.

There are burnt offerings.

Sin offerings.

Peace offerings.

Blood is placed upon the altar.

The land is divided among the tribes.

A river flows out from the sanctuary.

Trees grow upon its banks.

And the book concludes with the name of the city:

> The LORD is there.
> — Ezekiel 48:35

It is easy to understand why many readers say, “This must describe a literal temple in a future kingdom.”

The amount of detail seems to invite that conclusion.

And we should not dismiss that instinct as foolish.

But detail does not answer the most important theological question.

**How can a vision containing Levitical priests and animal sacrifices be understood after the once-for-all offering of Jesus Christ?**

That is where the difficulty begins.

At least three broad approaches deserve to be named. Some read the vision as a literal future sanctuary in a millennial kingdom. Others understand it as a restoration vision given to exiles in priestly covenant language—a real prophetic promise of reordered holiness and divine presence, though the temple described was never built according to Ezekiel’s measurements. A third emphasis follows the canonical trajectory of presence: it asks how later Scripture takes up Ezekiel’s sanctuary, river, city, healing, and glory and carries them toward their final destination.

Those approaches are not identical, but they show why the choice is not simply “literal future temple” or “free allegory.” The decisive question is how the completed work of Christ and the later inspired use of Ezekiel govern the vision.

## Ezekiel Really Does Speak of Sacrifice

Sometimes discussion of this passage becomes too vague.

Ezekiel does not merely describe a beautiful building.

He describes sacrifices in language connected with sin and reconciliation.

For example:

> And one lamb out of the flock... for a meat offering, and for a burnt offering, and for peace offerings, **to make reconciliation for them**, saith the Lord GOD.
> — Ezekiel 45:15

The prince is also instructed concerning:

> to give burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths...
> — Ezekiel 45:17

And Ezekiel speaks repeatedly of sin offerings.

That creates a genuine interpretive problem.

Because Hebrews does not speak vaguely about what happened to sacrifice after Christ came.

It speaks with finality.

## The Memorial-Sacrifice Interpretation

Many premillennial interpreters recognize that problem.

Their answer is that Ezekiel’s future sacrifices will not compete with Calvary.

They will be **memorial sacrifices**.

Old Testament sacrifices looked forward to the cross.

Millennial sacrifices, on this reading, would look backward to the cross.

That interpretation deserves to be stated fairly.

Its purpose is to protect the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice while maintaining a literal reading of Ezekiel.

But there is an important difficulty:

**Ezekiel never calls these sacrifices memorials.**

Ezekiel uses the language of sacrifice, sin offering, blood, priestly service, and reconciliation.

The word *memorial* is supplied later because the reader already knows from the New Testament that animal blood cannot function as a competing means of atonement after Christ.

And notice what that means.

Even the strict literalist is already allowing the New Testament to govern how Ezekiel may be interpreted.

That is precisely the principle we have followed throughout this book.

The question is not whether the New Testament controls Ezekiel.

It must.

The question is how far that apostolic control reaches.

## Hebrews Has Already Set the Boundary

Hebrews gives us several boundaries that no interpretation of Ezekiel can cross.

First, the priesthood has changed:

> For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.
> — Hebrews 7:12

Christ possesses:

> an unchangeable priesthood.
> — Hebrews 7:24

Then Hebrews speaks of the covenant itself:

> In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old.
> — Hebrews 8:13

And concerning sacrifice:

> For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.
> — Hebrews 10:14

Hebrews also says:

> He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.
> — Hebrews 10:9

Those are not the words of a temporary suspension.

The apostolic direction is not:

**Levi, then Christ, then Levi again.**

It is from the provisional priesthood to the unchangeable Priest.

From repeated offerings to one offering forever.

From the first covenant to the better covenant.

From shadow to Substance.

As noted in Part II, Paul's "natural...spiritual" order in 1 Corinthians 15:46 was used only as an analogy of direction, not as a proof-text about Ezekiel. Hebrews itself establishes the controlling point: the temporary priesthood and repeated offerings have given way to Christ's unchangeable priesthood and once-for-all sacrifice. Whatever Ezekiel's temple means, it cannot require us to reverse what Hebrews declares Christ has permanently accomplished.

## So Must Ezekiel Be "Only Symbolic"?

Not necessarily.

That is another false choice.

We do not have to decide that every cubit, chamber, gate, and measurement is meaningless symbolism.

Ezekiel received a real vision.

Its details mattered.

But prophetic visions often communicate reality through the language and forms available within the covenant world of the prophet.

Ezekiel was a priest.

He thought in terms of sanctuary, holiness, sacrifice, land, priesthood, and the presence of God.

The question is not whether his vision was real.

The question is **where the vision was going**.

And the New Testament gives us a striking clue.

Because John reads Ezekiel too.

That is why the strongest New Testament control is not merely negative—telling us what Ezekiel cannot mean after Calvary. It is positive and canonical. John takes up Ezekiel's city, measurements, river, trees, nations, and divine presence and carries those images toward their destination in the New Jerusalem.

## John Reads Ezekiel Too

The closing chapters of Revelation are filled with echoes of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel is taken to a high mountain and shown a city.

John writes:

> And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem...
> — Revelation 21:10

Ezekiel's city is measured.

John's city is measured.

Ezekiel sees water flowing from the sanctuary:

> Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house...
> — Ezekiel 47:1

John sees:

> a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.
> — Revelation 22:1

Ezekiel sees trees along the river whose fruit is for food and leaves for healing.

John sees the tree of life:

> and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
> — Revelation 22:2

The parallels are too substantial to dismiss.

John is not abandoning Ezekiel.

He is carrying Ezekiel forward.

And then he says something astonishing.

## "And I Saw No Temple Therein"

John writes:

> And I saw **no temple therein**: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.
> — Revelation 21:22

That deserves to sit beside Ezekiel 40-48.

John has Ezekiel's city.

Ezekiel's measuring.

Ezekiel's river.

Ezekiel's life-giving trees.

Ezekiel's restored creation imagery.

But when John reaches the temple, he does not give us a larger sanctuary.

He says:

**There is no temple building.**

Why?

> for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

That is the same movement we have seen throughout the New Testament.

Jesus said:

> Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.
> — John 2:19

John explained:

> But he spake of the temple of his body.
> — John 2:21

Paul tells believers:

> ye are the temple of God
> — 1 Corinthians 3:16

And Revelation ends with:

> the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

The Bible does not end by returning us to the shadow.

It ends with the Reality filling everything.

Now, to be precise, Revelation 21:22 by itself does not prove that a premillennial interpreter could not place a temple in an earlier millennial period.

Revelation 21 describes the consummated city after the scenes of Revelation 20.

So we should not make John prove more than he says.

But John unquestionably shows us the **direction of fulfillment**.

The final dwelling of God with man is not a restored stone sanctuary.

It is God and the Lamb immediately present with His people.

## And Finally, Revelation 20

For many Christians, Revelation 20 settles the entire matter.

John writes:

> And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.
> — Revelation 20:4

And again:

> they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.
> — Revelation 20:6

Christians have disagreed for centuries about how to understand this millennium.

Some see it as a future earthly reign following Christ's return.

Others understand it as describing the present reign of Christ and His saints in symbolic apocalyptic language.

This book deliberately does not try to settle that entire debate; it does not need to. The narrower question is whether Revelation 20 itself can serve as the source for the whole restored-Israel, restored-temple, restored-Levitical-priesthood, restored-sacrifice system commonly placed inside the millennium. It cannot. The chapter teaches the binding of Satan, thrones, saints reigning with Christ, the first resurrection, a thousand years, Satan's release, final rebellion, and judgment. Those are the doctrines the chapter actually supplies. A rebuilt temple, Levitical priests, animal sacrifices, tribal land allotments, a restored Mosaic covenant, and Jerusalem as the capital of a renewed Levitical order must be established from other passages, not imported into Revelation 20.

## The Millennium Is Not the Entire Restoration System

Two questions are often merged that should remain separate.

The first question is:

**Does Revelation 20 teach a millennium?**

The second is:

**Does Revelation 20 teach the entire restored Mosaic system often placed within that millennium?**

Those are not the same question.

A historic premillennial Christian may believe strongly in a future earthly millennium and still reject restored Levitical sacrifices.

In other words, rejecting a return to the shadows does not require one to reject every possible future millennial interpretation.

That keeps the discussion where it belongs.

The issue throughout this book has never been the number one thousand.

The issue is whether the climax of redemption requires God to reverse the apostolic movement from shadow to Substance.

Revelation 20 does not say that it does.

The restored system must be established from somewhere else.

It cannot simply be imported into the word *millennium*.

## The Hard Texts Do Not Undo the Apostolic Direction

We can now look back across the entire argument.

Acts 3 speaks of:

> the restitution of all things.

Yes.

But Peter does not define restitution as the restoration of the Mosaic covenant.

Luke 1 promises Jesus the throne of David.

Yes.

And Acts 2 presents the risen Son of David as raised up to sit upon that throne.

Matthew 19 speaks of twelve thrones and twelve tribes.

Yes.

But it does not establish two covenant peoples or restore Levi.

Romans 11 speaks of Israel's fullness, receiving, and salvation.

Yes.

And if Paul anticipates a future widespread turning of ethnic Israel, the natural branches are grafted into the same olive tree through faith.

Ezekiel sees priests and sacrifices.

Yes.

But Hebrews tells us the priesthood has changed and Christ's offering perfects forever.

Revelation 20 speaks of saints reigning with Christ for a thousand years.

Yes.

But the chapter never says the old covenant order returns.

And Revelation itself carries Ezekiel's imagery forward into a city where:

> the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

The hard texts matter.

But none of them requires us to reverse the apostolic direction.

## The Elephant Is Still in the Room

And so we return one final time to the question that started this book.

**How did the apostles read Israel's promises after Christ came?**

They began with an enthroned Son of David.

The promised Seed reaches Christ.

The inheritance opens outward until Abraham is heir of the world.

The earthly Jerusalem opens toward the Jerusalem above.

The temple reaches its reality in Christ and His people.

The Levitical priesthood gives way to the unchangeable priesthood of Christ.

Repeated sacrifices give way to one offering forever.

Jew and Gentile are reconciled in one body.

The natural branches, if restored, return to the same olive tree through faith.

And the final city has no temple building because God and the Lamb are its temple.

That is not an argument from silence.

That is an apostolic pattern.

The question was never whether the Old Testament contains earthly, national, territorial, priestly, and ceremonial language.

Of course it does.

The question is what happened to those promises when the One to whom they pointed actually came.

And the apostles answer again and again:

**Christ.**

The risen Christ.

The ascended Christ.

The enthroned Christ.

The reigning Christ.

The promised Seed.

The true Temple.

The everlasting Priest.

The once-for-all Sacrifice.

The Head of one new man.

The Root sustaining one olive tree.

The Lamb who is the light and temple of the final city.

That is why the New Testament must govern our reading of the prophets.

Not because the Old Testament has been discarded.

But because its Substance has arrived.

The shadow was true.

But it was a shadow.

The type mattered.

But it pointed beyond itself.

The promise mattered.

And the promise found its Amen.

Paul gives us the center of the entire discussion:

> For all the promises of God **in him are yea, and in him Amen**, unto the glory of God by us.
> — 2 Corinthians 1:20

In Him.

Not around Him.

Not beside Him.

Not back behind Him.

**The prophetic hope does not terminate in the restoration of the shadows.**

**It terminates in Jesus Christ.**

# A Pastoral Word

This book has dealt with prophecy, covenant, Israel, the temple, the priesthood, and the millennium. But the purpose of such study is not merely to win an argument or move a marker on an eschatological chart. It is to see Jesus Christ more clearly and to live beneath His present lordship.

If the Son of David is enthroned now, obedience cannot be postponed. If we are the temple of God by the Spirit, holiness cannot be deferred to another age. If Jew and Gentile are one new man in Christ, pride has no place. If the natural branches stand or fall by faith, Gentile boasting is excluded. And if the shadows have reached their Substance, our calling is not to rebuild what pointed forward, but to walk in the life that has come.

Read the prophets again. Read them with the risen Christ before you, Hebrews beside you, Romans 11 keeping you humble, and Revelation keeping your hope large. Let the promises lead you into worship, obedience, love, and confident expectation. Christ reigns now. He shall appear in glory. The dead shall rise, the last enemy shall be destroyed, and creation shall be delivered.

Until that day, do not merely defend the throne—bow before the King. Do not merely explain the temple—be a holy habitation of God through the Spirit. Do not merely argue for one new man—walk in peace with those whom Christ has reconciled. And do not merely confess that the promises are Yea and Amen in Him—possess, by faith and obedience, the inheritance God has already given you in His Son.

Look unto Jesus. Hear Him. Follow Him. The prophetic hope is not a road leading away from Christ. Every true line of it meets in Him.

# Glossary

**Apostolic Interpretation**

Reading the Old Testament in light of the inspired explanations given by Christ's apostles after His death, resurrection, exaltation, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost.

**Christian Zionism**

A broad label used for Christian support of Zionism or the modern State of Israel and, in some forms, for a theological system that assigns national Israel a distinct continuing prophetic or covenantal destiny. This book is not a political assessment of the modern State of Israel and does not assume that every Christian Zionist holds the same views. It addresses only the theological claim that Old Covenant national, territorial, priestly, or sacrificial forms must return as the climax of redemption.

**Davidic Throne**

The throne promised to David's Seed. This book understands Acts 2 and Psalm 110 to present the risen Jesus as already enthroned, while His reign still moves toward open consummation.

**Fulfillment**

The bringing of promise, type, and prophecy to their intended goal. Fulfillment does not mean the earlier Word was false; it means its purpose has arrived in a greater reality.

**Historic Premillennialism**

The expectation of a future millennial reign after Christ's return without necessarily adopting the full restored-temple, restored-priesthood, or two-peoples system associated with classical dispensationalism.

**Intercalation / Parenthesis**

In classical dispensational usage, the claim that the present Church age is an interval or parenthesis in Israel's prophetic program—an interruption in the prophetic clock before that national program resumes. This book does not attempt a

complete critique of dispensational chronology, but it rejects any model in which Christ's present reign, the New Covenant, or the one new man are treated as parenthetical to a more primary redemptive program.

**Israel According to the Flesh**

Paul's expression for ethnic and historical Israel. It recognizes a real people and history but does not teach that ancestry alone grants saving covenant membership.

**Israel in Christ**

A concise way of saying that Israel's promises reach their saving goal in the Messiah and that Jewish salvation, present or future, is found through union with Him rather than through a separate covenant path.

**Jerusalem Above**

The free and heavenly Jerusalem described in Galatians 4, Hebrews 12, and Revelation 21—the city of the living God and the covenantal home of those who belong to Christ.

**Memorial-Sacrifice Interpretation**

The view that sacrifices in Ezekiel's future temple would commemorate Christ's completed work rather than provide atonement. This book notes that Ezekiel himself does not call the sacrifices memorials and therefore subjects any such reading to Hebrews' once-for-all teaching.

**Olive Tree**

Paul's image in Romans 11 of one covenant people nourished by the holy root of God's promises to the fathers. Natural branches may be broken off in unbelief or grafted in again through faith; Gentile believers stand only by faith.

**One New Man**

Paul's description in Ephesians 2:15 of believing Jews and Gentiles created in Christ as one reconciled people. The phrase denies both Gentile superiority and separate redeemed peoples.

**Restitution of All Things**

Peter's phrase in Acts 3:21 for the great restoration spoken by the prophets. This book argues that the phrase cannot be assumed to mean the reinstatement of every Old Covenant form.

**Shadow and Substance**

The relationship between Old Covenant forms that anticipated Christ and the greater reality that arrived in Him. The shadow is divinely meaningful, but it must not be restored as a rival to its Substance.

**Two Peoples**

Shorthand for the view that Israel and the Church remain distinct covenantal peoples with separate redemptive destinies. This book does not deny the continuing ethnic distinction between Jew and Gentile; it challenges the claim that redemption finally requires two covenant peoples or two saving programs after Christ has made both one in Himself.

**Typology**

The God-ordained correspondence by which earlier persons, events, institutions, and places anticipate a greater fulfillment in Christ and His kingdom. Sound typology follows Scripture rather than imaginative resemblance alone.

# Scripture Index

*References are indexed to the pages on which they are cited or discussed in the introduction, five-part argument, and pastoral conclusion. KJV spellings are retained inside Scripture quotations.*

**Psalm**

**110**: 2, 4-6; **110:1**: 4

**Isaiah**

**2**: v

**Jeremiah**

**31**: v

**Ezekiel**

**40-48**: 12, 33, 40; **45:15**: 35; **45:17**: 35; **47:1**: 39; **48:35**: 34

**Amos**

**9**: 14

**Zechariah**

**12-14**: v

**Matthew**

**19**: 43; **19:28**: 23

**Luke**

**1**: 22, 43; **1:32-33**: 22

**John**

**2:19**: 10, 40; **2:21**: 10, 40

**Acts**

**1**: 1-2; **1:6**: 1; **1:7-8**: 1; **2**: 3, 22, 43; **2:30-31**: 2; **2:32-33**: 2; **2:34-35**: 2; **2:36**: 3; **3**: 20, 22, 43; **3:19-21**: 21; **3:25-26**: 21; **15**: 13-14; **15:14**: 13; **15:15**: 13; **15:16**: 13

**Romans**

**4:13**: 8; **9-11**: 19; **11**: iv, 24-25, 27, 30, 32, 43, 47; **11:1-2**: 25; **11:5**: 25; **11:6**: 26; **11:11**: 26; **11:15**: 26; **11:17-18**: 27; **11:19-20**: 27; **11:23**: 28; **11:24**: 28; **11:25**: 29; **11:26**: 24; **11:26-27**: 29; **11:28**: 30; **11:29**: 30; **11:30-32**: 31

**1 Corinthians**

**3:16**: 10, 40; **15:25-26**: 3; **15:46**: 12, 37

**2 Corinthians**

**1:20**: viii, 17, 46

**Galatians**

**3:16**: 7, 20; **3:29**: 8, 20; **4:25-26**: 9

**Ephesians**

1:20-21: 4; 1:22: 4; 2: 22-23, 31; 2:11-12: 18; 2:13: 18; 2:14-18: 19; 2:21-22: 10

**Hebrews**

**1:3**: 5; **7-10**: 33; **7:12**: 11, 36; **7:24**: 11, 37; **8:13**: 37; **10:9**: 37; **10:12-13**: 5; **10:14**: 11, 37; **12:22**: 9

**1 Peter**

**2:5**: 11

**2 Peter**

**3:13**: 20

**Revelation**

**20**: vii, 33, 41-44; **20-22**: 33; **20:4**: 41; **20:6**: 41; **21**: 41; **21:10**: 39; **21:12**: 23; **21:14**: 23; **21:22**: 40-41; **22:1**: 39; **22:2**: 39

# Subject Index

Abrahamic promise / Seed v, vii, 7-8, 15, 20-21, 24-25, 30, 44-45
Acts 3, restitution of all things 18, 20-22, 24, 43, 50
Amos 9; David's fallen tabernacle v, 13-15
Apostolic interpretation v, viii, 9, 12, 15, 19, 31, 37, 43-45, 48
Christian Zionism 48, 55
Davidic throne iv, vi, vii, 1-7, 14, 18, 21-24, 43-44, 47-48
Ezekiel 40-48 12-13, 32-40, 43-44
Faith and unbelief 24-25, 27-28, 30-32, 43, 45, 47, 50
Fulfillment 7-8, 12-13, 15-17, 20, 24, 31, 41, 48, 50, 55
Gentiles iv, v, vi, 8, 13-15, 18-20, 24, 26-32, 44, 47, 50
Historic premillennialism 42, 48
House of Jacob 18, 22
Intercalation / parenthesis 49
Israel according to the flesh 2, 19, 25, 49
Israel, future mercy toward iv, vi, 24-32, 43
Jerusalem above 9, 15-16, 44, 49
Levitical priesthood 11-12, 15-16, 21, 23, 32-34, 37, 42-44
Memorial-sacrifice interpretation 35-36, 49
Millennium / Revelation 20 vii, viii, 33-37, 39, 41-45, 47-48
New Covenant 31, 37, 49
New Jerusalem 38-39
Olive tree 24-25, 27-28, 30-32, 43, 45, 49, 55
One new man 18-19, 22, 31, 45, 47, 49-50
Priesthood of Christ 11-12, 15-16, 24, 37, 44
Replacement theology 19
Restoration v, vii, viii, 1, 14-15, 18-24, 26, 28-29, 31, 33-34, 42-43, 46, 50
Romans 11 iv, 24-32, 43, 47, 50
Sacrifice, once-for-all 5, 11-13, 15-16, 24, 32, 34, 37, 44-45, 49
Shadow and Substance v, vi, 12-13, 15-16, 37, 43, 46-47, 50, 54-55
Temple, Christ and His people as 10-11, 24, 32, 40, 45, 47
Temple, Ezekiel's 12-13, 32-40, 43-44
Twelve tribes / Twelve apostles 18, 23, 43
Two peoples 19, 43, 50
Typology 16, 46, 48, 50

# About the Author

Rick Simoni writes for The Overcomer Magazine, encouraging believers to see the unity of the Scriptures in Jesus Christ and to live in the reality of His finished work, present reign, and indwelling life. His writing emphasizes the movement from shadow to substance, the fellowship of Christ's body, and the obedience that grows from faith.

The Overcomer Press is a publishing ministry of The Overcomer Magazine. Its books are prepared for the encouragement of believers and the strengthening of a Christ-centered understanding of Scripture.

**For articles, Bible studies, and freely available books, visit theovercomer.org.**

# The Fulfillment in Christ Series

*A companion to The Elephant in the Room*

# Flesh and Spirit

*Why Christian Zionism Cannot See the Kingdom*

**Rick Simoni**

What happens when a prophetic system moves the Church's gaze from Christ's present kingdom toward ethnic destiny, territorial inheritance, and a return to Old Covenant forms? Flesh and Spirit applies the apostolic framework of The Elephant in the Room and traces the believer's inheritance from shadow to Substance in Christ.

## Read these books together

The Elephant in the Room establishes the apostolic framework: how Christ and His apostles teach us to read Israel's promises after the cross, resurrection, and exaltation.

Flesh and Spirit applies that framework to Christian Zionism and explores what fulfillment means for the kingdom, the people of God, the temple, the olive tree, and our present inheritance in Christ.

A TOP Publication
Explore the Bookshelf at theovercomer.org