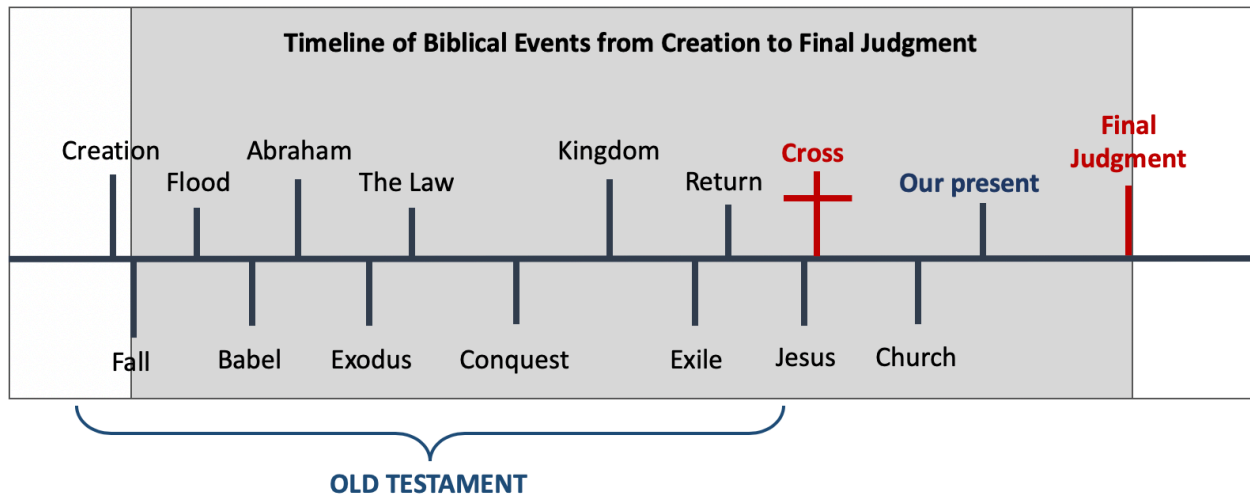


Lesson 30: The Jewish Expectation (II)

Previously...




After the exile, there was a partial return of Jews to Jerusalem.

In all of Yahweh's history with the Jews, they had consistently failed to keep the Mosaic Law. They were never able to get themselves right with God.

So, through the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Yahweh told them about a New Covenant that He would make with them.

Yahweh said He would do something totally different. Instead of an external law, He would put His law into the people's hearts! He would make the Jews right with Him from the inside out!

New Covenant



Unconditional Promises

- God will forgive sins
- God will put His law into hearts
- God will regather Israel back to the Promised Land forever.

Jeremiah 31:31-34
Ezekiel 36:22-32

Mosaic Law
External



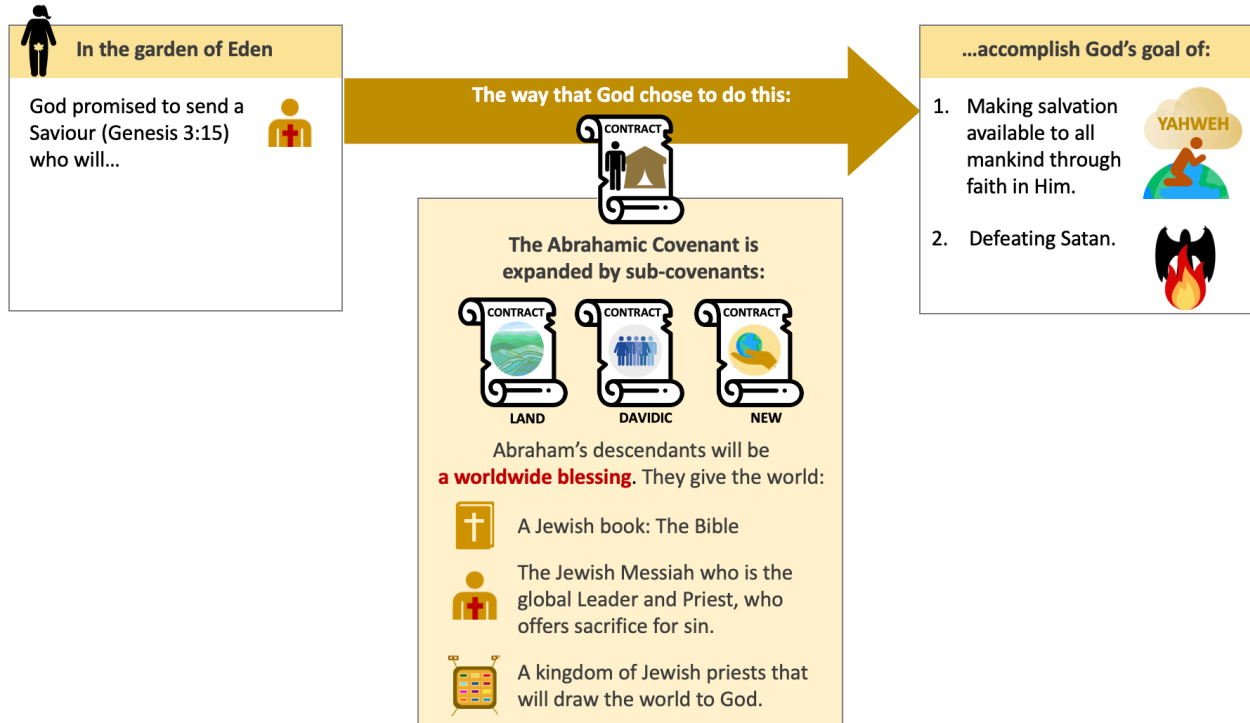
Written in stone
Failed to make the people righteous

God's Law
Internal



Written in tender hearts
Holy Spirit works from within

This new contract would be made with Israel and Judah only. Importantly, with it, Israel would finally become the kingdom of priests led by the Messiah that God had always intended. They would be able to properly represent God to the nations. In this way, God’s promise in the Abrahamic Covenant that Abraham’s descendants would be a worldwide blessing would finally come true!



So, the Jews were indeed waiting eagerly for God to fulfil His promises in the covenants and about the Messiah.

However, they also had in mind their upcoming Tribulation and the coming Kingdom.

What were the Jews expecting at the end of the Old Testament period?

A. About the Covenants	B. About the Messiah	C. About the Tribulation	D. About the Coming Kingdom
Jews were expecting to fully occupy the promised land, to have a son of David on the throne in Jerusalem and as a nation, have a new heart to love Yahweh forever.	Jews were waiting for God to send the promised Saviour.		



C. What the Jews were expecting about the Tribulation

The Jews knew they had rebelled against Yahweh all throughout their history. They knew they were to face great discipline in their future.

God had warned them of this from the birth of their nation, when He gave the Mosaic Law.

Deuteronomy 4:26–31

²⁶ “Today I call on heaven and earth as witnesses against you. If you break my covenant, you will quickly disappear from the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy. You will live there only a short time; then you will be utterly destroyed.

²⁷ For the LORD will scatter you among the nations, where only a few of you will survive.

²⁸ There, in a foreign land, you will worship idols made from wood and stone—gods that neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.

²⁹ But from there you will search again for the LORD your God. And if you search for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him.

³⁰ “In the distant future, when you are suffering all these things, you will finally return to the LORD your God and listen to what he tells you. ³¹ For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon you or destroy you or forget the solemn covenant he made with your ancestors.

<p>God called on heaven and earth to witness what He said would happen:</p>	<p>Israel would move into the Promised Land.</p>	<p>They would break God’s covenant.</p>	<p>God will send them into exile. There, they will worship idols and many will die.</p>	<p>But if they would truly search for God, He will reveal Himself to them.</p>

We have seen a remnant of Jews return from exile at the time of the partial return.

However, as a nation, they had not yet:

- searched for Yahweh with all their heart and soul (verse 29)
- returned to the LORD (verse 30).

This returning to Yahweh will be in the future and it will come about through a time of great suffering or tribulation (verse 30).

In the DISTANT future...

...when they are suffering...

...they will return to the LORD.

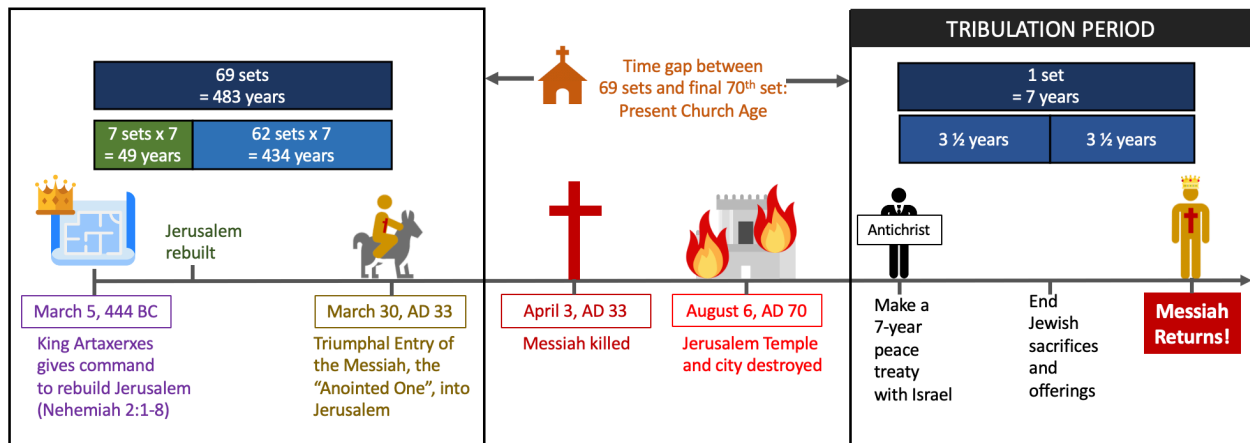
God will make sure they return to Him because of His unconditional covenant promises He made with Abraham.

Later on, during the time of the exile, the angel Gabriel told Daniel more about this (Daniel 9:24–27). Gabriel explained that 70 sets of 7 years would pass before the final regathering of the Jews.



But in the last set, the 70th set of 7 years, the Jews would suffer greatly.

The 70 sets (or “weeks”) of Daniel
Daniel 9:24–27



Note: In the Jewish Temple calendar, a year is 360 days.

The prophets Zechariah and Jeremiah also wrote about this awful time of the Tribulation:

- Zechariah used the phrase “the day of the LORD”, while...
- Jeremiah used the phrase “a time of trouble for my people Israel” (which the KJV translates as “the time of Jacob’s trouble”).

Other names for the Tribulation

- The day of the LORD
- A time of trouble for my people Israel
- The time of Jacob’s trouble

Both phrases refer to the time of Tribulation that Daniel wrote about: the 70th set of 7 years.

Zechariah 14:1–3

¹ Watch, for the day of the LORD is coming when your possessions will be plundered right in front of you! ² I will gather all the nations to fight against Jerusalem. The city will be taken, the houses looted, and the women raped. Half the population will be taken into captivity, and the rest will be left among the ruins of the city. ³ Then the LORD will go out to fight against those nations, as he has fought in times past.

Jeremiah 30:4–7

⁴ This is the message the LORD gave concerning Israel and Judah. ⁵ This is what the LORD says:

“I hear cries of fear;

there is terror and no peace.

⁶ Now let me ask you a question:

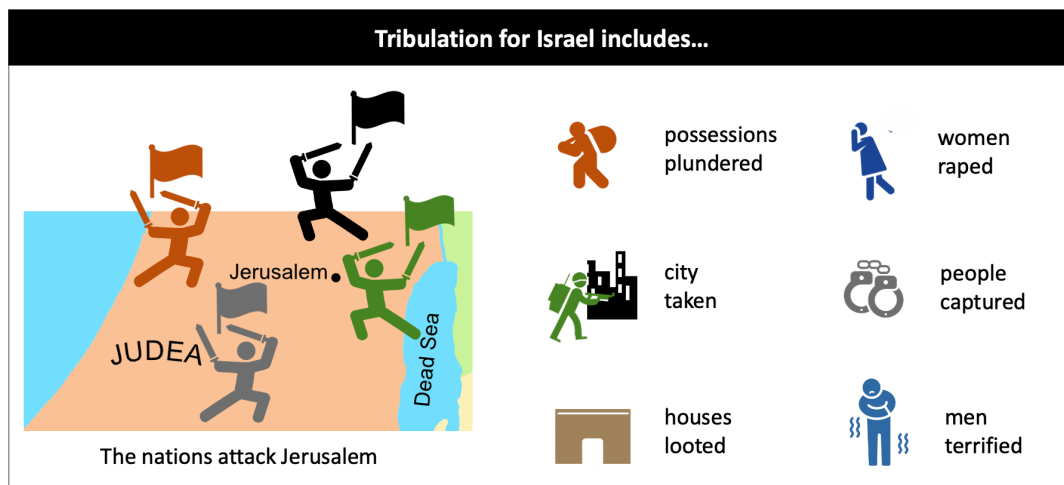
Do men give birth to babies?

Then why do they stand there, ashen-faced,
hands pressed against their sides
like a woman in labor?

⁷ In all history there has never been such a time of terror.

It will be a time of trouble for my people Israel.

Yet in the end they will be saved!



So what were the Jews expecting at the close of the Old Testament period?

- They were expecting a time of great suffering where God would judge them for all their hard-heartedness and rebellion.
- They knew that because of this great suffering, the entire nation of Israel would seek Yahweh, find Him and return to Him.
- In response, God would fight against their enemies and rescue them. It would end well for them.

WHEN?



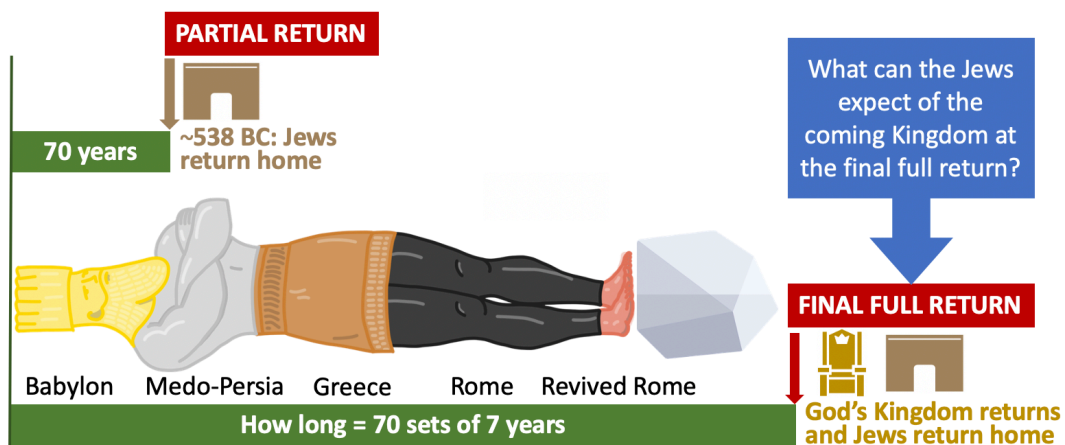


D. What the Jews were expecting about the coming Kingdom

At the close of the Old Testament, the Jews were no longer an independent nation. They knew their exile was discipline for breaking the Mosaic Covenant. They knew that five kingdoms of man had to come to pass before God’s Kingdom would return.

To help the Jews understand that He was a covenant-keeping God, Yahweh gave the prophets many specific prophecies on what the final full return of the Jews and the returning Kingdom of God would be like.

This was to encourage the people to persevere and endure the hard times. If they knew how amazing the future would be, they would be better able to have long-range hope and endurance.



So the prophets wrote about different aspects of what life would be like in the coming Kingdom. What did they say? We will look at these areas.

Nature	Government	People
1	2	3



1. Nature

Weather and climate

Nature in the coming Kingdom will be transformed from the world we currently live in. In fact, so many aspects of it will be unfamiliar that it will almost feel like a totally different planet! For example:

- the **sun** will be seven times brighter than now and the **moon** will be as bright as the sun!
- the **weather and climate** will be very cooperative: it will rain at the time when the plants need it.
- Also, there will be no shortage of **water** for everyone and all the vegetation because water will flow from every high ground! So all harvests will be plentiful and vegetation will always be rich and lush.

Isaiah 30:23–26

²³ Then the LORD will bless you with rain at planting time. There will be wonderful harvests and plenty of pastureland for your livestock. ²⁴ The oxen and donkeys that till the ground will eat good grain, its chaff blown away by the wind.

²⁵ In that day, when your enemies are slaughtered and the towers fall, there will be streams of water flowing down every mountain and hill. ²⁶ The moon will be as bright as the sun, and the sun will be seven times brighter—like the light of seven days in one! So it will be when the LORD begins to heal his people and cure the wounds he gave them.



rain at
planting time



plentiful
pastureland



wonderful
harvests



streams from
every hill



sun seven
times brighter

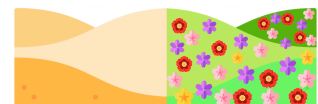
Also, there will no longer be any **wastelands** or unproductive, “ugly” parts of nature. God will cause wasteland to blossom with flowers, deserts to become green with vegetation and the whole earth to be well-watered! The curse that came with the Fall will be reversed significantly!

Isaiah 35:1–2, 6b–7

¹ Even the wilderness and desert will be glad in those days.

The wasteland will rejoice and blossom with spring crocuses.

² Yes, there will be an abundance of flowers and singing and joy!



The deserts will become as green as the mountains of Lebanon, as lovely as Mount Carmel or the plain of Sharon.

There the LORD will display his glory,
 the splendor of our God.
⁶ Springs will gush forth in the wilderness,
 and streams will water the wasteland.
⁷ The parched ground will become a pool,
 and springs of water will satisfy the thirsty land.
 Marsh grass and reeds and rushes will flourish
 where desert jackals once lived.



The land will be so productive that **food** will be plentiful. In fact, people will barely be able to keep up with the harvest! Importantly, there will be no hunger and starvation in the whole land.

Amos 9:13

“The time will come,” says the LORD,
 “when the grain and grapes will grow faster
than they can be harvested.
 Then the terraced vineyards on the hills of Israel
 will drip with sweet wine!



Animals

The animals in this new Kingdom will all live in peace with each other and with all mankind. There will no longer be killing or eating of each other in the animal world because all the animals will be plant-eaters.

Man and animals will be safe from harm from each other.

Isaiah 11:6–9

⁶ In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together;
 the leopard will lie down with the baby goat.
 The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion,
 and a little child will lead them all.
⁷ The cow will graze near the bear.
 The cub and the calf will lie down together.
The lion will eat hay like a cow.
⁸ The baby will play safely near the hole of a cobra.
 Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes
 without harm.
⁹ Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,
 for as the waters fill the sea,
 so the earth will be filled with people who know the LORD.



Geography

Even the geography of the land will change. For example, in this stunning prophecy in the next passage, Yahweh Himself seems to have a finite human body with human feet and when He stands on the Mount of Olives, He will cause it to split apart!

Zechariah 14:3–4, 8

³ Then the LORD will go out to fight against those nations, as he has fought in times past. ⁴ On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. And the Mount of Olives will split apart, making a wide valley running from east to west. Half the mountain will move toward the north and half toward the south.



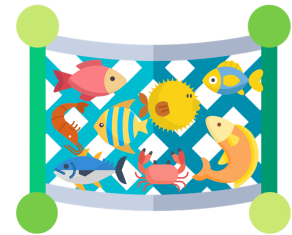
⁸ On that day life-giving waters will flow out from Jerusalem, half toward the Dead Sea and half toward the Mediterranean, flowing continuously in both summer and winter.

That is not all. Water will also flow out of the Temple of God, half flowing towards the Dead Sea and half flowing towards the Mediterranean. And God will change the environment. The Dead Sea will no longer be dead! This is what the angel who was showing all this to Ezekiel said:

Ezekiel 47:8–11

⁸ Then he said to me, “This river flows east through the desert into the valley of the Dead Sea. The waters of this stream will make the salty waters of the Dead Sea fresh and pure. ⁹ There will be swarms of living things wherever the water of this river flows. Fish will abound in the Dead Sea, for its waters will become fresh. Life will flourish wherever this water flows.





¹⁰ Fishermen will stand along the shores of the Dead Sea. All the way from En-ge-di to En-eglaim, the shores will be covered with nets drying in the sun. Fish of every kind will fill the Dead Sea, just as they fill the Mediterranean. ¹¹ But the marshes and swamps will not be purified; they will still be salty.



Living in the coming Kingdom will not be at all like living on the earth we currently know. God will renew so much of it that people will think they are living in the garden of Eden!

However, notice who is the One who is renewing nature. It is Yahweh. Why? At the Fall, God supernaturally judged both man and nature. Mankind failed in their job as under-lords and what they were supposed to take care of was also severely damaged. So everything became abnormal: the human body, the make-up of animals and even the structure of plants changed in ways that we don't fully understand (Genesis 3:14–19).

To renew such badly fallen nature will take yet another supernatural work. And God is the only One capable of doing such work. He is the only Saviour of both man and nature. Fallen mankind cannot save nature. The church and Christians cannot save nature. Environmentalists cannot save nature.

Capable of renewing nature?			
Fallen mankind?  NO	Church and Christians?  NO	Environmentalists?  NO	Saviour?  YES

It is true that we as fallen mankind are called to responsible living and caring for the environment. However, we must never be tricked into thinking that we can save and restore all the damage that we have caused. That kind of arrogant thinking belongs in the “Kingdom of Man”, not the “Kingdom of God”.

<p>Pagan Kingdom of Man</p> <p>Based on WORKS</p> <p>Man would save himself through his own ideas</p>	<p>Kingdom of God</p> <p>Based on GRACE</p> <p>God would save man</p>
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There is only one Saviour of the world. And it is only by God’s grace that He will renew and restore both man and nature. And God will get all the glory for it.

Throughout the Bible, we have seen that man and nature are intimately linked. For example, when God gave the Mosaic Law to Israel, He told them that their obedience to Him would directly affect their weather, climate, crops, etc. (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28).

This will be similar even in the Kingdom period. If Gentile nations refuse to submit to God and worship Him in His capital, Jerusalem, God will judge their environment.

Zechariah 14:17

Any nation in the world that refuses to come to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, will have no rain.



2. Government

Ruler

The supreme leader of the coming Kingdom will be the promised Messiah. God had told King David that his dynasty will last forever because a Son of David will be on the throne forever. Even prophets after David’s time wrote about this.

Isaiah 11:1–5, 10

¹ Out of the stump of David’s family will grow a shoot—yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root.

² And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³ He will delight in obeying the LORD.

He will not judge by appearance
nor make a decision based on hearsay.

⁴ He will give justice to the poor
and make fair decisions for the exploited.

The earth will shake at the force of his word,
 and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked.
⁵ He will wear righteousness like a belt
 and truth like an undergarment.

¹⁰ In that day the heir to David's throne
 will be a banner of salvation to all the world.
 The nations will rally to him,
 and the land where he lives will be a glorious place.

However, some Jews were not sure what this exactly meant.

First, if indeed a Son of David is supposed to rule forever, will he even be human? To be David's son, he must be a human. But no human can live forever! So then does this mean that the Son is immortal? How? Is he God? Or is he human but with an immortal body?

Second, how can the Messiah be a descendent of David's royal line when God had already cursed and disqualified that line at the time of the exile?

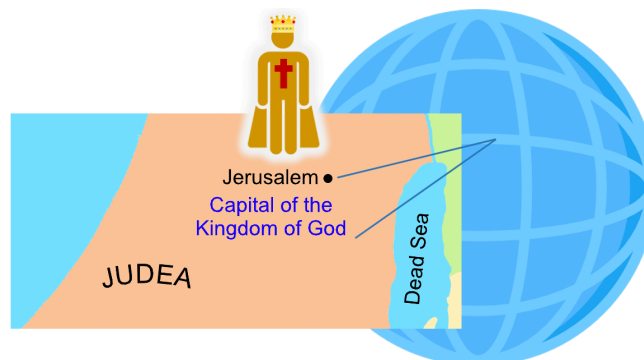
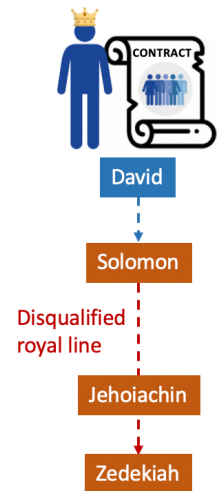
In a later lesson, we will see that the New Testament gives us a surprising answer.

Importantly, this coming Kingdom of God will not just be a Jewish kingdom. This Kingdom will rule the whole world. The capital of the Kingdom of God will be in Jerusalem and it will be from this actual location on earth that God Himself will physically and directly rule. Jerusalem will be both the political and spiritual centre of the world for all nations. The Messiah's leadership will be on a global scale! All this is something that has never happened before in the history of the world!

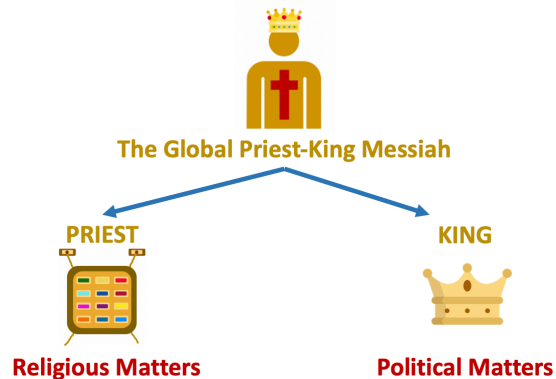
At this future time, Israel will also at last fulfil its God-given role as the nation of priests for the whole world (Exodus 19:6).

Isaiah 24:23

Then the glory of the moon will wane,
 and the brightness of the sun will fade,
 for the LORD of Heaven's Armies will rule on Mount Zion.
 He will rule in great glory in Jerusalem,
 in the sight of all the leaders of his people.



From the office of His global government, the Messiah will rule as both the priest and political leader over all humans on earth.



- **As priest**, the Messiah will personally perform His priestly duties.
 - ▶ He will **teach** the Word of God to all the people in the world. And people from all nations will come to learn from Him how to handle their individual sins as well as their national sins.



Isaiah 2:1–3

¹ This is a vision that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

² In the last days, the mountain of the LORD's house
will be the highest of all—

the most important place on earth.

It will be raised above the other hills,

and people from all over the world will stream there to worship.

³ People from many nations will come and say,

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of Jacob's God.

There he will teach us his ways,

and we will walk in his paths.”

For the LORD's teaching will go out from Zion;

his word will go out from Jerusalem.



Isaiah 11:9

Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,

for as the waters fill the sea,

so the earth will be filled with people who know the LORD.

- ▶ He will **give direct access to God** for those who believe in Him. Through His past sacrifice that Isaiah had prophesied about, the Messiah would have died for the sins of mankind. He would have made it possible for God to forgive sinners. So at this future time, the Messiah will **make intercession** for all who will come to Him.



Isaiah 53:5, 11–12

⁵ But he was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.

He was beaten so we could be whole.

He was whipped so we could be healed.

¹¹ When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish,
he will be satisfied.

And because of his experience,

my righteous servant will make it possible
for many to be counted righteous,
for he will bear all their sins.

¹² I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier,
because he exposed himself to death.

He was counted among the rebels.

He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

- **As a political ruler**, the Messiah will rule with a “rod of iron” (Psalm 2:9; Revelation 19:15), meaning His authority is supreme and powerful. Why does He need to be so strict and firm? It is because the population of the world at this time will still include fallen human beings with sin natures.

However, the Messiah will not only rule humans. He will also have total and absolute control over the angelic realm as the “LORD of heaven’s armies”.





This means there will be no rebellion from both humans and demons at this time! Because of this, there will be real worldwide peace! There will no longer be any fighting and wars between nations and peoples.

Isaiah 2:4

The LORD will mediate between nations
and will settle international disputes.

They will hammer their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will no longer fight against nation,
nor train for war anymore.

For war time	For peace time
	
swords...	...into plowshares
	
spears...	...into pruning hooks

The Messiah will be such a respected King and Leader that even previous enemies of Israel will turn to worship Him.

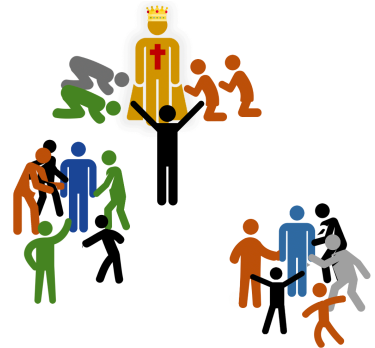
Zechariah 14:16

In the end, the enemies of Jerusalem who survive the plague will go up to Jerusalem each year to worship the King, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, and to celebrate the Festival of Shelters.

People will greatly respect and admire the nation of Israel because under the Messiah’s direct leadership, they will finally be a real blessing to the whole world. So even ordinary Jews will become very popular among the people of different nations.

Zechariah 8:22–23

²² Many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD of Heaven’s Armies and to ask for his blessing. ²³ “This is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies says: In those days ten men from different nations and languages of the world will clutch at the sleeve of one Jew. And they will say, ‘Please let us walk with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”

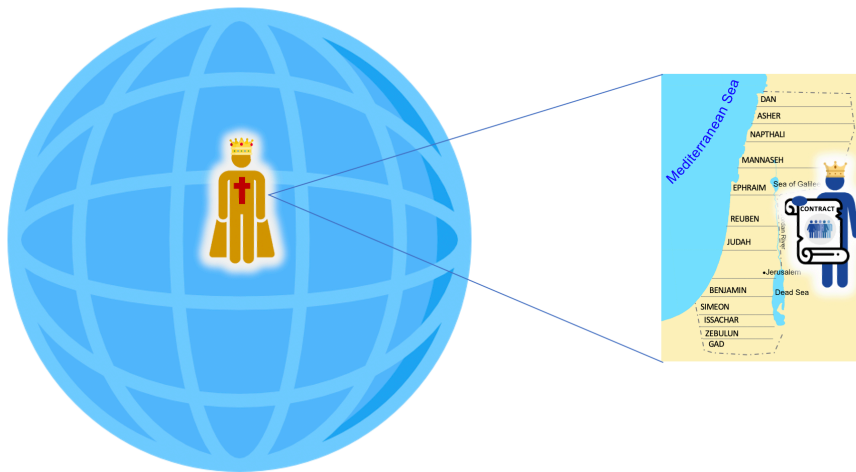


Prince David

While the Messiah will rule from Jerusalem over the entire globe, King David will be resurrected and will rule under the Messiah over the redeemed nation of Israel! This was the promise that God had made to David and it will be fulfilled at this point in time. David’s kingdom will indeed be an everlasting one.

**Messiah will rule
the entire world
from His office in Jerusalem**

**Prince David will rule
the nation of Israel
from Jerusalem, under Messiah**



How do we know this? This is what the prophet Jeremiah wrote about the people of Israel at the time of the Kingdom of God:

Jeremiah 30:9 (ESV)

But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

The people of Israel will be led by Yahweh and David! In fact, when God gave the prophet Ezekiel a vision of Israel coming back together into the Promised Land (the vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37), God also provided an interesting detail:

Ezekiel 37:25

They will live in the land I gave my servant Jacob, the land where their ancestors lived. They and their children and their grandchildren after them will live there forever, generation after generation. And my servant David will be their prince forever.

Did you catch what God was saying? David himself will come back to rule a re-established Israel! In fact, Ezekiel says this again in another passage.

Ezekiel 34:23–24

²³ And I will set over them one shepherd, my servant David. He will feed them and be a shepherd to them. ²⁴ And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David will be a prince among my people. I, the LORD, have spoken!

So in the Kingdom of God, the Messiah will be King over all the earth, and David will be a king under him over Israel!



3. People

Who will be in the coming Kingdom?

Will all the Jews be in the coming Kingdom? No. Before the restart of the Kingdom:

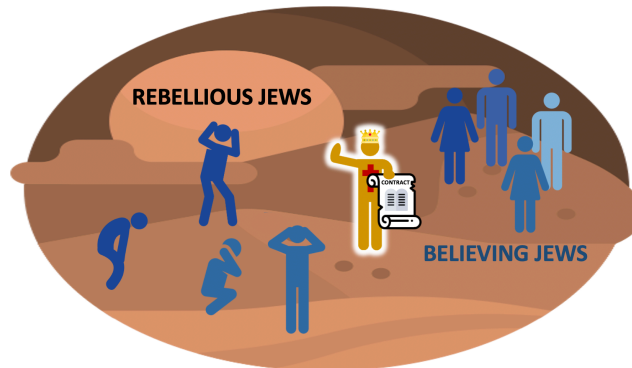
- Yahweh will gather all Israel from around the world and bring them to the wilderness.
- They will all stand before God to be judged.
- Every Jew who has chosen to continually rebel against Him will be destroyed. They will not be allowed to enter the Kingdom.

Ezekiel 20:33–38

³³ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I will rule over you with an iron fist in great anger and with awesome power. ³⁴ And in anger I will reach out with my strong hand and powerful arm, and I will bring you back from the lands where you are scattered. ³⁵ I will bring you into the wilderness of the nations, and there I will judge you face to face.

³⁶ I will judge you there just as I did your ancestors in the wilderness after bringing them out of Egypt, says the Sovereign LORD. ³⁷ I will examine you carefully and hold you to the terms of the covenant. ³⁸ I will purge you of all those who rebel and revolt against me. I will

bring them out of the countries where they are in exile, but they will never enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.



This judgment is part of the Tribulation. It will purge, or get rid of, unbelieving, rebellious Jews. But every **Jew** who has chosen to put their faith in Yahweh will be allowed to enter the Kingdom!

Ezekiel 39:25–29

²⁵ “So now, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will end the captivity of my people; I will have mercy on all Israel, for I jealously guard my holy reputation!

²⁶ They will accept responsibility for their past shame and unfaithfulness after they come home to live in peace in their own land, with no one to bother them. ²⁷ When I bring them home from the lands of their enemies, I will display my holiness among them for all the nations to see.

²⁸ Then my people will know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them away to exile and brought them home again. I will leave none of my people behind. ²⁹ And I will never again turn my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit upon the people of Israel. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!”

Thankfully, the Jews will not be the only people group in the coming Kingdom. Believing **Gentiles** from all over the world will also enter the Kingdom! This is what God said to the Messiah:

Isaiah 49:6

He says, “You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me.

I will make you a light to the Gentiles,
and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”

Indeed, many Gentiles from all around the world will stop worshipping idols and turn to worship God right where they live.

Zephaniah 2:11

The LORD will terrify them

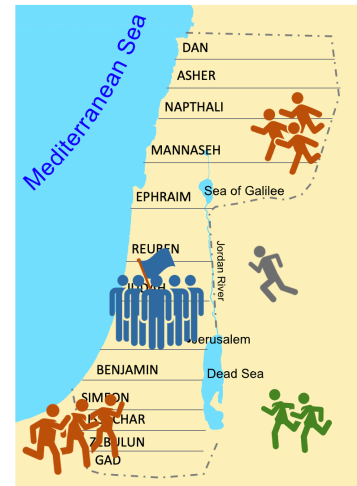
as he destroys all the gods in the land.

Then nations around the world will worship the LORD,
each in their own land.

It will be a time when believing Jews and believing Gentiles will both be in the Kingdom of God.

Isaiah 14:1–2

¹ But the LORD will have mercy on the descendants of Jacob. He will choose Israel as his special people once again. He will bring them back to settle once again in their own land. And people from many different nations will come and join them there and unite with the people of Israel. ² The nations of the world will help the people of Israel to return, and those who come to live in the LORD'S land will serve them. Those who captured Israel will themselves be captured, and Israel will rule over its enemies.



Where will the Jews live when they come back?

God will put them in the Promised Land. They will finally receive all the land that God promised Abraham! In all of history, the Jews have never occupied all of the Promised Land. But in the coming Kingdom, Yahweh will give them the full extent that He had promised.

This land will be divided up into their tribal divisions. In Ezekiel 47:13–48:35, Yahweh gave specific geographical details, along with exact measurements on how the Promised Land will be divided up among the tribes.

Scan through the passage, focusing on the underlined parts. We will see that it is like a land title deed. It is very specific and serious.

Ezekiel 47:13–48:35

¹³ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: “Divide the land in this way for the twelve tribes of Israel: The descendants of Joseph will be given two shares of land. ¹⁴ Otherwise each tribe will receive an equal share. I took a solemn oath and swore that I would give this land to your ancestors, and it will now come to you as your possession.

¹⁵ “These are the boundaries of the land: The northern border will run from the Mediterranean toward Hethlon, then on through Lebo-hamath to Zedad; ¹⁶ then it will run to Berothah and Sibraim, which are on the border between Damascus and Hamath, and finally to Hazer-hatticon, on the border of Hauran. ¹⁷ So the northern border will run from the Mediterranean to Hazar-enan, on the border between Hamath to the north and Damascus to the south.

¹⁸ “The eastern border starts at a point between Hauran and Damascus and runs south along the Jordan River between Israel and Gilead, past the Dead Sea and as far south as Tamar. This will be the eastern border.

¹⁹ “The southern border will go west from Tamar to the waters of Meribah at Kadesh and then follow the course of the Brook of Egypt to the Mediterranean. This will be the southern border.

²⁰ “On the west side, the Mediterranean itself will be your border from the southern border to the point where the northern border begins, opposite Lebo-hamath.

²¹ “Divide the land within these boundaries among the tribes of Israel. ²² Distribute the land as an allotment for yourselves and for the foreigners who have joined you and are raising their families among you. They will be like native-born Israelites to you and will receive an allotment among the tribes. ²³ These foreigners are to be given land within the territory of the tribe with whom they now live. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!”

¹ “Here is the list of the tribes of Israel and the territory each is to receive. The territory of Dan is in the extreme north. Its boundary line follows the Hethlon road to Lebo-hamath and then runs on to Hazar-enan on the border of Damascus, with Hamath to the north. Dan’s territory extends all the way across the land of Israel from east to west.

² “Asher’s territory lies south of Dan’s and also extends from east to west.

³ Naphtali’s land lies south of Asher’s, also extending from east to west.

⁴ Then comes Manasseh south of Naphtali, and its territory also extends from east to west.

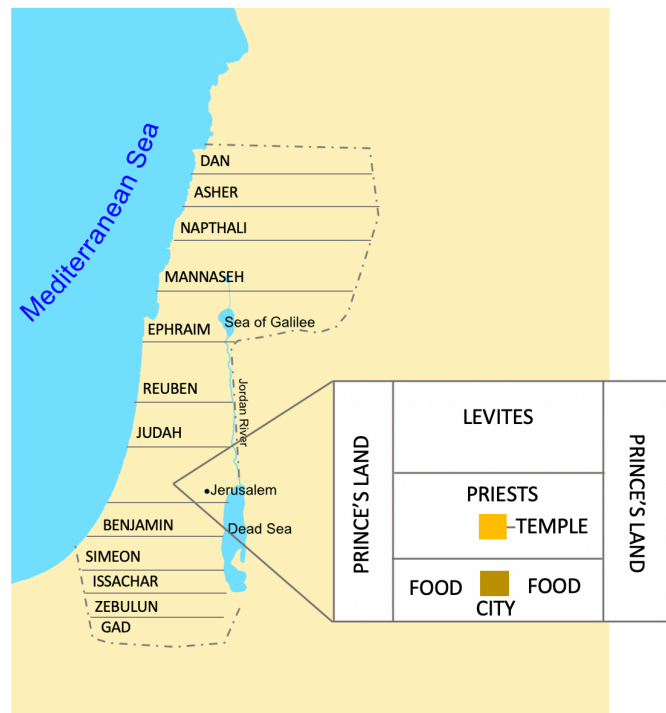
⁵ South of Manasseh is Ephraim,

⁶ and then Reuben, ⁷ and then Judah, all of whose boundaries extend from east to west.

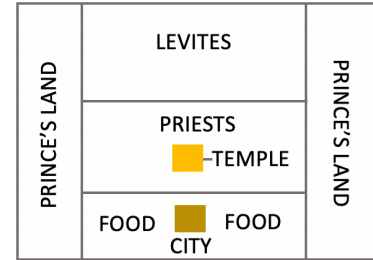
⁸ “South of Judah is the land set aside for a special purpose. It will be $8\frac{1}{3}$ miles wide and will extend as far east and west as the tribal territories, with the Temple at the center.

⁹ “The area set aside for the LORD’s Temple will be $8\frac{1}{3}$ miles long and $6\frac{2}{3}$ miles wide. ¹⁰ For the priests there will be a strip of land measuring $8\frac{1}{3}$ miles long by $3\frac{1}{3}$ miles wide, with the LORD’s Temple at the center. ¹¹ This area is set aside for the ordained priests, the descendants of Zadok who served me faithfully and did not go astray with the people of Israel and the rest of the Levites. ¹² It will be their special portion when the land is distributed, the most sacred land of all. Next to the priests’ territory will lie the land where the other Levites will live.”

¹³ “The land allotted to the Levites will be the same size and shape as that belonging to the priests— $8\frac{1}{3}$ miles long and $3\frac{1}{3}$ miles wide. Together these portions of land will measure $8\frac{1}{3}$ miles long by $6\frac{2}{3}$ miles wide. ¹⁴ None of this special land may ever be sold or traded or used by others, for it belongs to the LORD; it is set apart as holy.”



¹⁵ “An additional strip of land $8\frac{1}{3}$ miles long by $1\frac{2}{3}$ miles wide, south of the sacred Temple area, will be allotted for public use—homes, pasturelands, and common lands, with a city at the center. ¹⁶ The city will measure $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles on each side—north, south, east, and west. ¹⁷ Open lands will surround the city for 150 yards in every direction.



¹⁸ Outside the city there will be a farming area that stretches $3\frac{1}{3}$ miles to the east and $3\frac{1}{3}$ miles to the west along the border of the sacred area. This farmland will produce food for the people working in the city. ¹⁹ Those who come from the various tribes to work in the city may farm it. ²⁰ This entire area—including the sacred lands and the city—is a square that measures $8\frac{1}{3}$ miles on each side.

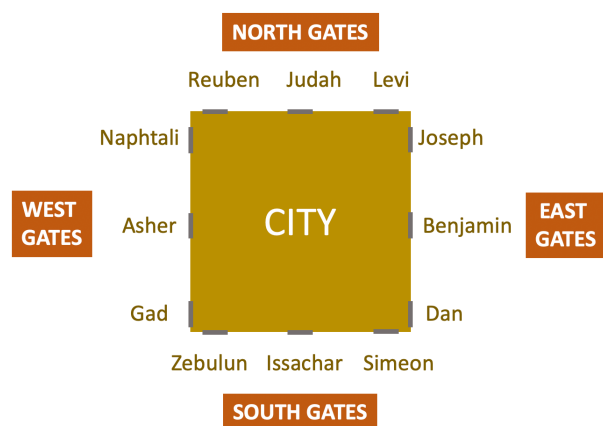
²¹ “The areas that remain, to the east and to the west of the sacred lands and the city, will belong to the prince. Each of these areas will be $8\frac{1}{3}$ miles wide, extending in opposite directions to the eastern and western borders of Israel, with the sacred lands and the sanctuary of the Temple in the center. ²² So the prince’s land will include everything between the territories allotted to Judah and Benjamin, except for the areas set aside for the sacred lands and the city.

²³ “These are the territories allotted to the rest of the tribes. Benjamin’s territory lies just south of the prince’s lands, and it extends across the entire land of Israel from east to west. ²⁴ South of Benjamin’s territory lies that of Simeon, also extending across the land from east to west. ²⁵ Next is the territory of Issachar with the same eastern and western boundaries.

²⁶ “Then comes the territory of Zebulun, which also extends across the land from east to west. ²⁷ The territory of Gad is just south of Zebulun with the same borders to the east and west. ²⁸ The southern border of Gad runs from Tamar to the waters of Meribah at Kadesh and then follows the Brook of Egypt to the Mediterranean.

²⁹ “These are the allotments that will be set aside for each tribe’s exclusive possession. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!

³⁰ “These will be the exits to the city: On the north wall, which is $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, ³¹ there will be three gates, each one named after a tribe of Israel. The first will be named for Reuben, the second for Judah, and the third for Levi. ³² On the east wall, also $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, the gates will be named for Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan. ³³ The south wall, also $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, will have gates named for Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun. ³⁴ And on the west wall, also $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, the gates will be named for Gad, Asher, and Naphtali.



³⁵ “The distance around the entire city will be 6 miles. And from that day the name of the city will be ‘The LORD Is There.’”

Where will the Gentiles live?

Foreigners had always been allowed to live in Israel. But in the coming Kingdom, they will also be allowed to enjoy other privileges previously reserved for the Israelites: Gentiles who choose to live with the tribes and choose to become Jewish can do so! And they will also be given their own land! This is what God told the Jews.



Isaiah 56:3a, 6–8

³ “Don’t let foreigners who commit themselves to the LORD say, ‘The LORD will never let me be part of his people.’

⁶ “I will also bless the foreigners who commit themselves to the LORD, who serve him and love his name, who worship him and do not desecrate the Sabbath day of rest, and who hold fast to my covenant.

⁷ I will bring them to my holy mountain of Jerusalem and will fill them with joy in my house of prayer.

I will accept their burnt offerings and sacrifices, because my Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations.

⁸ For the Sovereign LORD, who brings back the outcasts of Israel, says:

I will bring others, too, besides my people Israel.”

However, it appears most Gentiles will live spread out over all the earth but will come to worship God in Jerusalem.

Zechariah 8:20–22

²⁰ “This is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies says: People from nations and cities around the world will travel to Jerusalem. ²¹ The people of one city will say to the people of another, ‘Come with us to Jerusalem to ask the LORD to bless us. Let’s worship the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. I’m determined to go.’ ²² Many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD of Heaven’s Armies and to ask for his blessing.

Where will the priests live?

By the new Temple. In dividing up the land among the tribes, God also reserved an area $8\frac{1}{3}$ by $6\frac{2}{3}$ miles (13.41 by 10.73 km) for a new temple district that will be built in the coming Kingdom. God showed the prophet Ezekiel in a vision the exact floor plans for the temple, its rooms and open areas. He gave specific dimensions to this new temple (Ezekiel 40–42).

What will the people be like?

They will have new hearts! Before the Kingdom restarts, God will judge all Israel and remove all unbelieving Jews. But at that time, God will also give believing Jews new hearts that will obey Him!

As recorded in the New Covenant that He will make with Israel, Yahweh will pour out His Holy Spirit into them, causing all these believing Jews to have the inner ability to obey God and as a result, enjoy His blessings!

Ezekiel 36:24–28

²⁴ For I will gather you up from all the nations and bring you home again to your land. ²⁵ “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations. ²⁸ “And you will live in Israel, the land I gave your ancestors long ago. You will be my people, and I will be your God.



All the people in regathered Israel will therefore be obedient and willingly submissive to their God and His rule! In the coming Kingdom, the promises made in the New Covenant to national Israel will be completely fulfilled. The entire nation of Israel will be restored and the Holy Spirit will live in all Jews.

Good health and long lives

In the coming Kingdom, God will reverse the curse on the body so that people will live very long, healthy lives. However, because the coming Kingdom is not the future, perfect Eternal State, there will still be death.

Isaiah 65:20

“No longer will babies die when only a few days old.
 No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life.
No longer will people be considered old at one hundred!
 Only the cursed will die that young!



This improved state of health brought about by the Messiah will also include healing of those who are disabled.

Isaiah 35:5–6a

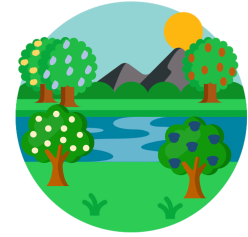
⁵ And when he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind
 and unplug the ears of the deaf.
⁶ The lame will leap like a deer,
 and those who cannot speak will sing for joy!



God even causes His newly re-created nature to provide healing for the people! This is what Ezekiel saw on the sides of the river flowing from the Temple.

Ezekiel 47:12

Fruit trees of all kinds will grow along both sides of the river. The leaves of these trees will never turn brown and fall, and there will always be fruit on their branches. There will be a new crop every month, for they are watered by the river flowing from the Temple. The fruit will be for food and the leaves for healing."

**Wealthy, productive and satisfying lives**

In the coming Kingdom, there is economic prosperity for everyone. And no one will be poor or lazy. Everyone will lead very satisfying lives, enjoying the fruits of their labour. Right from creation, God had given the divine institution of responsible dominion: mankind was supposed to take care of nature well. Nature will then provide enough food and resources so that people's marriages and families can prosper and thrive.

Under the Messiah's wise leadership and the fulfilment of the New Covenant promises at the time of the Kingdom, Israel will finally exercise responsible dominion in this way. Their care over the improved nature will cause them to become prosperous which will lead to them having successful future generations. And King David's government will ensure private property is protected and not illegally taken away.

Isaiah 65:21–23

²¹ In those days people will live in the houses they build and eat the fruit of their own vineyards.

²² Unlike the past, invaders will not take their houses and confiscate their vineyards.

For my people will live as long as trees, and my chosen ones will have time to enjoy their hard-won gains.

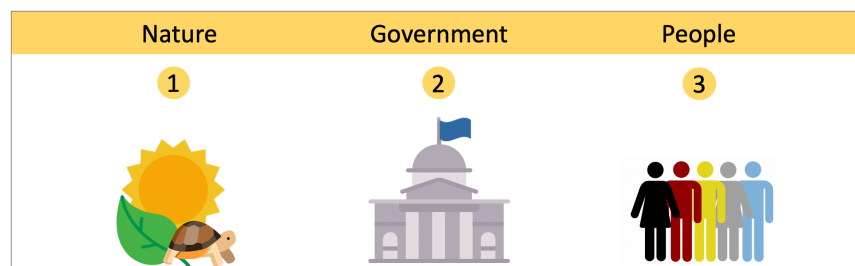
²³ They will not work in vain, and their children will not be doomed to misfortune.

For they are people blessed by the LORD, and their children, too, will be blessed.



Even though mankind living in the Kingdom of God will still be fallen, under the Messiah's rule, the divine institutions will function at their peak. All people on earth will prosper because of that.

This is an overview of what the Jews expected about the coming Kingdom in terms of nature, government and people. The books of the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Zechariah contain more details.



What were the Jews expecting at the end of the Old Testament period?			
A. About the Covenants	B. About the Messiah	C. About the Tribulation	D. About the Coming Kingdom
Jews were expecting to fully occupy the Promised Land, to have a Son of David on the throne in Jerusalem and as a nation, have a new heart to love Yahweh forever.	Jews were waiting for God to send the promised Saviour.	Jews were expecting a time of great Tribulation for their people before God rescues them.	Jews were eagerly waiting for all the amazing promises: world peace, Messiah and Prince David ruling from Jerusalem, Israel a superpower, great prosperity for all, no natural disasters and a renewed earth and nature.

Hope for the Jews

The Jews who studied the Scriptures diligently would have great reason to hope despite the difficult times they lived in.

1. They would have been strengthened and encouraged by what they had been told about the future Kingdom.
2. They would have been excited to learn that all of God’s covenant promises will be fulfilled in the coming Kingdom.

All these will be fully fulfilled in the coming Kingdom			
<p>Abrahamic Covenant</p> <p>Unconditional Promises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land • Descendants • Worldwide blessing <p>Genesis 12:1-3</p>	<p>Land Covenant</p> <p>Confirmation of land promise</p> <p>Deuteronomy 29:1-30:10</p>	<p>Davidic Covenant</p> <p>Confirmation of descendants promise</p> <p>2 Samuel 7:11-17</p>	<p>New Covenant</p> <p>Confirmation of worldwide blessings promise</p> <p>Jeremiah 31:31-24</p>

3. And they would have been assured by the fact that Yahweh has a good track record of keeping promises. For example:
 - They could see that Yahweh continued to keep the Noahic Covenant.
 - They also experienced Him enacting the blessings and cursings of the Mosaic Covenant.

They knew they could therefore trust Him to keep His promises on all the other matters as well.



For the Jews, the covenants and prophecies gave them hope for the future. Their time after the exile wasn't easy. God wasn't actively ruling over them. Nor was He actively speaking through the prophets. The people had to rely on God's Word, prayer and the long-range hope that came through the promises that Yahweh had made.



Hope for the Gentiles

The Jews who lived during the time of the partial return are very similar to believers in today's generation.

Jews at the time of the partial return	Believers today
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> God was not visibly ruling over them  God was not actively speaking through the prophets  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jesus is no longer visibly on earth  God is not actively speaking through prophets 
<p>So they had to rely on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ God's Word  ➤ Prayer  ➤ Hope that came through the promises Yahweh made  	<p>Believers have to rely on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ God's Word  ➤ Prayer  ➤ Hope that comes through the promises Yahweh made  ➤ Holy Spirit working in us 

In many ways, believers today have a greater advantage than the Old Testament Jews.

- For God's Word, believers have both the completed Old and New Testaments.
- And in addition, all believers have the indwelling Holy Spirit working in them.

Just as the Jews had to live by faith, believers today live by faith. But it is not an empty faith. God has provided a lot of content:

- information about who He is,
- what His character is like, and
- what He will do for mankind in the future.

Let us build our faith by studying the Scriptures He left us and treasuring the promises He made. This will give us assurance that there is a plan and purpose for mankind and for our lives.

Knowing God through His Word builds our hope. We won't despair and worry that life is meaningless and headed nowhere. On the contrary, God is still directing history towards His ultimate good end.

Are the descriptions of the coming Kingdom real? Should we actually expect them to come true in the real physical world?

We need to look at the history of the Jews to help us answer this question. This is what had happened to them.



When God first promised Abraham land, He gave the family actual physical land.

When the Jews lost the land, God promised to return them to the land one day. So, the Jews were fully expecting to get back the actual land in the Middle East that they had lost.

In assuring the Jews of this, Yahweh's prophets wrote down clear descriptions of actual locations and dimensions.

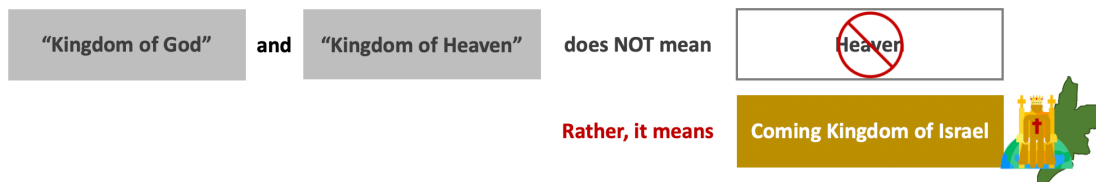
Questions:

1. Is it in God's character to break contracts?
2. Does He have a track record of changing the terms of the contracts so He can get out of fulfilling them?
3. Or is God a prankster and He is playing a cruel joke on the Israelites by saying that the "land" in their mind is just a "spiritual" thing and He never meant to return them actual land? Had they lost actual land but God would replace it with something else?

In studying God's words, actions and behaviour in the Old Testament, we can confidently answer NO to all three questions. In keeping with His own character and contracts, God will most definitely return the Jews to Jerusalem. They will finally possess the full area of land that God had originally promised.

Why do some people even wonder if it is real land or not?

1. **Misunderstanding the words.** Sometimes, people don't quite understand the Old Testament use of the word "Kingdom", so they think it refers to something else.



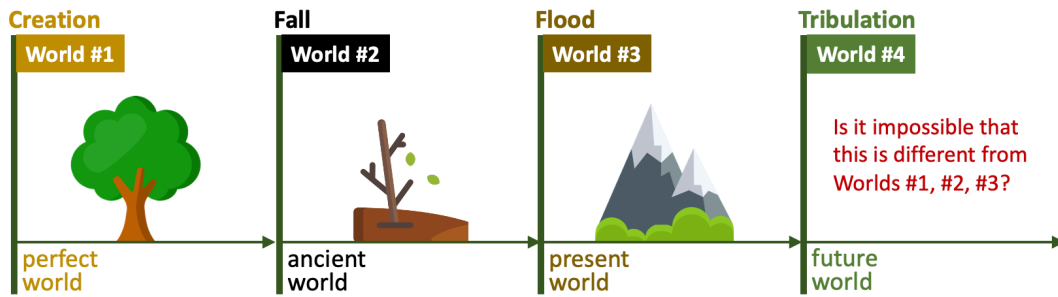
To understand what the Bible means by certain words, it is important for us to study the historical context and see where it appears in others parts of the Bible. That will help us understand how the Bible itself interprets and defines those words. We will do more of this in another lesson.

2. **Descriptions are too amazing.** When reading about the coming Kingdom, some people have a really hard time because the descriptions are too incredible. They think it is unbelievable and therefore must not be real.

For example, they cannot believe that the coming world and nature will change so much that it will be so drastically different from our world today.

Yet, God had told us in the Old Testament that in the history of the world, there were already two such dramatic changes:

- The world after the Fall was totally different than the world that Adam and Eve lived in before the Fall.
- The world after the Flood was also entirely different from the world after the Fall.



God was in control of the changes in the past and as Creator-God of the universe, He is fully able to change the world again as He pleases.

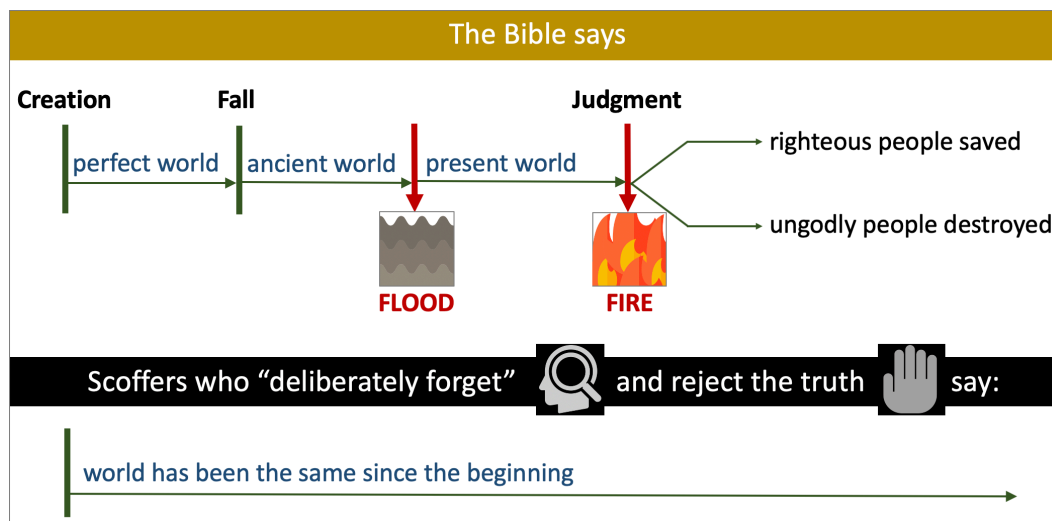
However, God warned us that some people will not believe that such changes are possible.

2 Peter 3:3–7

³ Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. ⁴ They will say, “What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.”

⁵ They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water.

⁶ Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. ⁷ And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed.



If we believe the Old Testament accounts that God did indeed change the world several times, it is not hard to believe that God will renew the earth for the coming Kingdom.

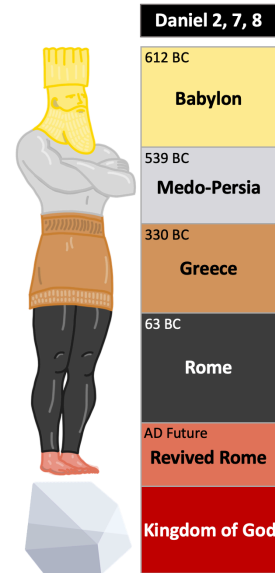
Importantly, this renewal is God’s work, not man’s.


We must never ever forget that a rock “cut from a mountain, but not by human hands” (Daniel 2:31) is the one that will crush the Kingdom of Man.

God Himself will bring in the Messiah as King over the earth. He will introduce a totally honest and upright government, and He will install His righteous values on all society.

- God is the One who had handed over political power to pagans.
- God is the One who introduced the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24).
- And God will be the One who will crush the pagan kingdoms of man. This is His work.

This is not the work of man, the Jews, the church or believers.



Capable of renewing the world?			
Fallen mankind?  NO	Church and Christians?  NO	Jews?  NO	Saviour?  YES

Any human effort to bring in the promised, glorified Kingdom age instead of waiting for God to do so in His way and at His timing will fail. How do we know this?

Within the prophecies in the book of Daniel, God sent this warning:

Daniel 11:14

At that time there will be a general uprising against the king of the south. Violent men among your own people will join them in fulfillment of this vision, but they will not succeed.

This speaks of a time around 200 BC where Jewish rebels tried to bring in the coming Kingdom (that is, fulfil the vision) through human methods. They fought the reigning government.

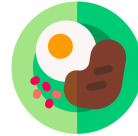
But God had already ordained that they would fail. They ignored the fact that it would be God who will bring in the returning Kingdom, not man.

Yahweh is a clear communicator

We must also recognise that God wrote His Word so that ordinary people can understand its meaning.

God has a specific message to communicate and there is a correct way to understand His message and many incorrect ways. We are not given the freedom to interpret God's words however we want.

When a person verbally says, "Let's have lunch together", there is only one correct way to understand this. When we read a newspaper article that there had been a bank robbery, there is only one correct way to understand that. Lunch is not metaphorical (a picture of something else) and neither is the bank robbery.



Yet, when it comes to the Bible, some people feel like they have the creative freedom to interpret the Bible however they want, making passages and verses metaphorical, and not understanding it in the context of the entire Scriptures, covenants, God's track record, His character or His actions. They make the "interpreter" the ultimate authority in place of God!

In general, knowing that God recorded His Word so we can understand His history and truth, we need to approach the Bible in a straightforward way. Scripture is not written like a riddle or a coded message that needs to be unlocked with a special key. We should read it using the normal, everyday, common understanding of the words, trusting that the Holy Spirit will guide us.

Having said that, here are two points to consider when we read the Bible.

A. At times, the Bible does use figures of speech or allegories.

Psalm 34:15

The eyes of the LORD watch over those who do right;
his ears are open to their cries for help.



Psalm 91:4

He will cover you with his feathers.
He will shelter you with his wings.
His faithful promises are your armor and protection.



Psalm 42:9

"O God my rock," I cry,
"Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I wander around in grief,
oppressed by my enemies?"



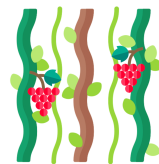
When the Bible speaks of the eye, ear, or wings of God, or when Scripture calls God a rock, we know we should not take this as literally true. This is because God is pure spirit and does not have physical features (John 4:24).

Because God has told us what He is actually like, we can recognise when God is using a figure of speech. God is using descriptions that we are familiar with to help us understand what He means.

We do this in normal, everyday conversation too. We might say, “I’m such a pig!” after eating too much at a meal but no one would think we had turned into an animal. They would immediately know we were using a figure of speech to express that we had been greedy and had eaten too much.



So when Jesus says, “I am the true vine” while He was in a vineyard (John 15:1), we know from the context that Jesus was not saying He was a grape-bearing plant. He was using an analogy or word picture to explain that He is the true source of life and we, His followers, should remain connected to Him. The context tells us this is the right way to understand Jesus’ words.



Generally, it’s not too hard to know when a Bible passage should or should not be taken literally. But sometimes, it’s a little tricky. So here are some guidelines that will help us.

A text should be understood as a word picture (or as a figure of speech) when:

1. It is obviously figurative, like for example, when Jesus said He was a door (John 10:9).
2. The text itself says that it is using a figurative sense, like for example, when Paul said he was using an allegory (Galatians 4:24).
3. A literal interpretation would contradict other truths inside or outside the Bible. For example, we can tell the Bible is speaking in a figurative way when it mentions the “four corners of the earth” (Revelation 7:1).

B. By taking the literal approach, that doesn’t mean we ignore symbols and parables.

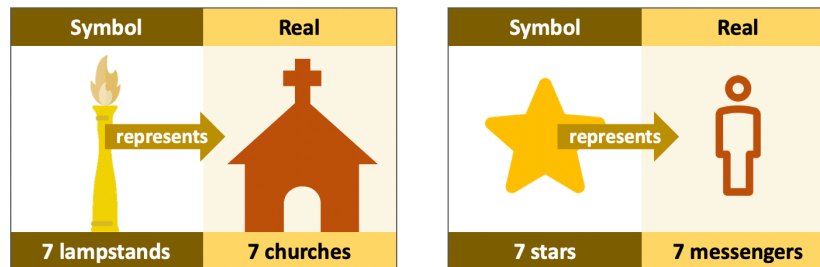
1. Symbols

The Bible is filled with symbols. But each symbol represents something real. For example, the book of Revelation contains many symbols that represent real things. This is what Jesus said about the seven stars in his hand.

Revelation 1:20

This is the meaning of the mystery of the seven stars you saw in my right hand and the seven gold lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

When the Bible uses symbols, there are often clues in the text and the context that tell us what real things are represented by the symbols.



2. Parables

Jesus told stories that didn't happen in real life, but the story itself taught a real or literal point. He taught in parables because He was only teaching those who were willing to listen to Him. We will learn how to interpret parables from Jesus Himself in a later lesson.

As we journey into the New Testament, we shall see how a literal, historical approach to the Bible brings clarity to our understanding of God, His plans for Israel, His plans for the church, and His plans for judgment and salvation of mankind and nature.

Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions as a group or use them for personal reflection.

1. How have you treated the prophetic passages about the future (like those found in Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah)? Have you understood them in a common sense, literal way or have you treated them more like descriptions of spiritual truth? Has your way of understanding Scripture changed? Why or why not?
2. As you read through what Yahweh declares Israel's future will be like, what have you learnt about God's character, His love for the chosen nation of Jews and His sovereign plan for where the world is headed? How does that make you feel?
3. How should knowing that Scripture contains legal contracts, historical records of actual events and advance information about future history affect the way we read it?



Pre-reading for Faith in Action III: Review lessons 21–30.