

## Jesus and Biblical Law - Part 8

### Paul, Biblical Law, and the Restoration of Israel

**Torah/Biblical Law** — Pentateuch; 613 law code instructions; literally: teaching/coaching or instruction

**The Gospel:**

| Blessings   | Curse (Age of Anger/Death):  | Restoration (Life of the Age to Come):  |
|---|--|---|
| Possession of the land<br>Peace with and blessing of the nations (other ethnic groups)<br>Long life<br>Flourishing and abundance<br>Multiplication and unity across 12 tribes<br>Service to God<br>Communion with God (Tabernacle/Temple)<br>National and covenantal life | Exile<br>Enmity with nations, oppression from foreign powers<br>Sickness and disease<br>Scarcity<br>Dispersion of 12 tribes<br>Enslavement to heavenly gods/powers<br>Destruction of the Temple<br>National and covenantal death | Repentance (turning around) and heart circumcision/transplant/unification with God's Spirit<br>Repossession of the land and restoration of the kingdom of God (Israel)<br>Conquering other nations, blessing and peace with other nations<br>Healing from sickness<br>Flourishing and abundance<br>Reunification of the 12 tribes<br>Defeat of the heavenly (and earthly) powers/gods and freedom from slavery (Jubilee)<br>Return of God to Zion<br>National and covenantal resurrection |

## **The Promises of the Restoration in the Gospels and Acts:**

**2 Cor. 1:20** *“All the covenant promises find their fulfillment in the Messiah.”*

1. Pentecost — Repentance (turning around) and heart circumcision/transplant/unification with God’s Spirit
2. (Answered later, in Galatians) — Repossession of the land and restoration of the kingdom of God (Israel)
3. Jesus’s defeat of death and ascension as ruling over all other nations — Conquering other nations, blessing and peace with other nations
4. Jesus’s community of caretakers — Healing from sickness
5. Sharing of all things — Flourishing and abundance
6. (Answered later, in Romans) — Reunification of the 12 tribes
7. Jesus’s defeat of death and ascension as ruling over all other gods and heavenly beings — Defeat of the heavenly (and earthly) powers/gods and freedom from slavery (Jubilee)
8. Pentecost — Return of God to Zion
9. National and covenantal resurrection

## **Pauline Logic:**

- **Colossians and Ephesians:**
  - By exhausting physical and covenant death → Messiah Jesus’s body experiences physical and covenant resurrection (life of the age to come) → by participating in his death and resurrection (through baptism into his death and resurrection and receiving God’s Spirit of holiness, two sides of one event) → his followers become the restoration community, receiving the circumcision of their hearts by the Spirit, able to live out faithfulness to God and biblical law
  - By extension, for those in the Messiah, the gods are defeated by Jesus, slavery to the gods/powers has ended, ethnic enmity/hostility is ended, death has ended, all products of the covenant curses (occasioned/described by biblical law)

- **Romans:**

- Israel -- All 12 tribes of the covenant family  
Iudaios (Judeans, Judahites, Jews) -- The Southern tribes of Israel
- Judeans experience the age of death because of unfaithfulness to God and biblical law → gentiles experience the age of death because they never had a covenant with God and biblical law → Judeans and gentiles ended up in the same position
- Northern Israel became gentile → God promised to give all Israel his Spirit, and reunify the 12 tribes → gentile inclusion into Israel
- God has not replaced Israel with gentiles, but in his faithfulness to Israel, has incorporated gentiles, so all 12 tribes of Israel could be rescued from the covenant curses (saved)
- God rescued the Jews from the covenant curses first, then incorporated the gentiles into a renewed covenant, multi-ethnic family
- God does not abolish biblical law, but through his Spirit, enables this family to fulfill it (like Jesus did)

- **Galatians:**

- Jesus became a curse (experienced covenant curses) to save Jews (and gentiles) from the covenant curses and became sin (experienced the fullness of the consequence of sin, death) to rescue all from death
- Membership in the restoration of the covenant comes through circumcision of the heart by the Spirit, not by being Judean, since they were in the same place as gentiles when the restoration occurred
- Gentiles *do not need to assimilate* (become Jewish) to follow the Messiah King of Israel
- Justification (membership in the restoration of the covenant) is by grace (the generosity of God and the gift of the Spirit of Holiness) by faith (Jesus's faithfulness to God, and our faithful, embodied allegiance to him), and not by works of biblical law (practicing biblical laws binding to Judeans)
  - This means the restoration of Israel did not come about by human earning or obedience
  - And one does not become a member by changing ethnicity

- **Acts 21:** Jews also obviously do not assimilate (*to become gentiles*) to be part of the restoration of the covenant

- **KEY: Not all biblical laws apply to all people! 1 Cor. 7:** Express faithfulness to biblical law by following the biblical law that applies to you
- **Acts 15:** Leviticus 17-18 claims that biblical law binding to gentiles are the love command (no violence, economic oppression, retaliation), sex crimes, and idolatry (consumption of blood)
- Halakha needs to be exercised to determine which biblical laws apply to which people in which contexts today!

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS from the New Testament:**

1. Biblical Law is a Gift of Love from God
2. The Gospel is Framed as the Restoration of Israel (first of the Jews, then including gentiles)
3. Paul and Jesus Are Not Supersessionists
4. The God of the New Testament Is the God of Israel (not just any “god” of philosophy)

### **Recommended reading**

- *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism: A New Theory of People, Exile, and Israelite Identity* by Jason Staples
- *Paul and the Resurrection of Israel: Jews, Former Gentiles, Israelites* by Jason Staples
- *Tertium Genus or Dyadic Unity?: Investigating Sociopolitical Salvation in Ephesians* by Andrew Rillera
- *Sharing in the Son’s Inheritance: Davidic Messianism and Paul’s Worldwide Interpretation of the Abrahamic Land Promise in Galatians* by Esau McCauley

## Questions

- How does this change how you read Paul?
- In history or experience, does the Spirit of Holiness really allow the restoration community (*theoretically the church*) to live out justice and biblical law faithfully?
- How could diverse unity speak to ethnic divisions that exist in the church today?
- Paul sees church unity and holiness as two sides of the same coin. How can we recover this?
- How can we debate how to live out covenant faithfulness without division?





