

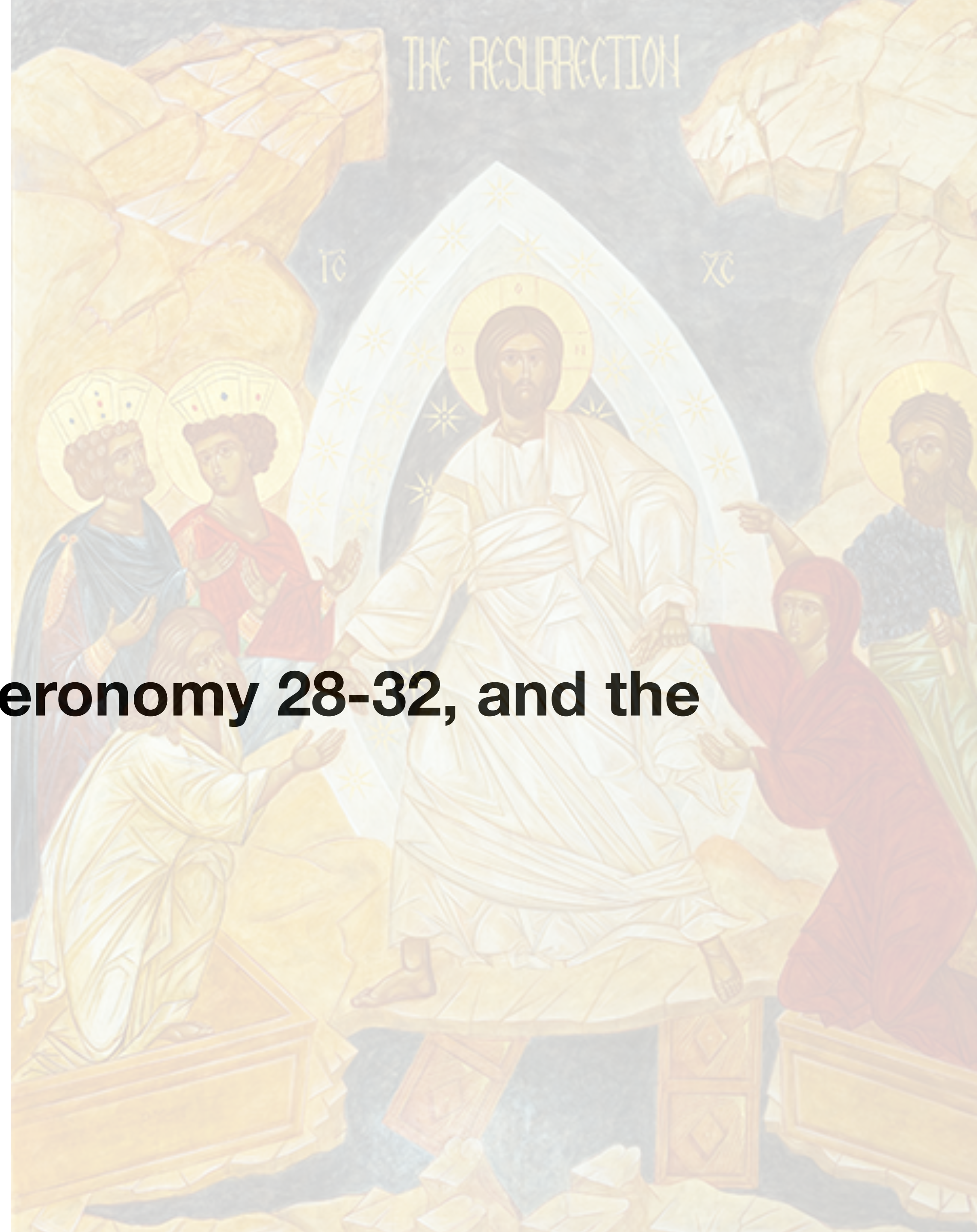


Paul, Biblical Law, and the Restoration of Israel

Jesus and Biblical Law Part 8

The Gospel

Language from Leviticus 25-26, Deuteronomy 28-32, and the Prophets



Recap

Cultivating Biblical Law vs. Living Against Biblical Law

- **Blessing (Age of Life):**

- Possession of the land
- Peace with and blessing of the nations (other ethnic groups)
- Long life
- Flourishing and abundance
- Multiplication and unity across 12 tribes
- Service to God
- Communion with God (Tabernacle/Temple)
- National and covenantal life

- **Curse (Age of Anger/Death):**

- Exile
- Enmity with nations, oppression from foreign powers
- Sickness and disease
- Scarcity
- Dispersion of 12 tribes
- Enslavement to heavenly gods/powers
- Destruction of the Temple
- National and covenantal death

The Gospel of the New Covenant

Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and the Prophets' Hope

- **Restoration (Life of the Age to Come):**
 - Repentance (turning around) and heart circumcision/transplant/unification with God's Spirit
 - Repossession of the land and restoration of the kingdom of God (Israel)
 - Conquering other nations, blessing and peace with other nations
 - Healing from sickness
 - Flourishing and abundance
 - Reunification of the 12 tribes
 - Defeat of the heavenly (and earthly) powers/gods and freedom from slavery (Jubilee)
 - Return of God to Zion
 - National and covenantal resurrection

Jesus's Gospel

According to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

- Claim to be the messianic king of Israel, restoring the kingdom of God (Israel) through his teaching, actions, and community of followers
- Depicted as divine life subjected to the covenant curses in his embodiment (death, the gods of the nations [the satan], foreign oppression)
- Sharing divine life and signs of the restoration in his ministry
- Experiencing the extent of the covenant curses in his death
- Resurrection as rescue into covenant resurrection
- Ascension as enthronement as King of Israel over all nations, rulers, and gods

The Earliest Church

The Church in Jerusalem in Acts

- Jewish sect who are “baptized” into Jesus’s death and resurrection, following him as the messianic king of the restoration
- Receiving God’s Spirit in Pentecost, renewing/circumcising their hearts, enabling them to live out biblical law
- See death (covenant curses) as a defeated enemy, transformed into a doorway into resurrection (covenant restoration)
- Communities of restoration and union with the divine life, meant to live out biblical law, defined by (cross-shaped) love
- Looked like a “Jubilee” community, sharing all things, praying, rituals of baptism and Eucharist as a Passover-like celebration feast, and caring for the poor

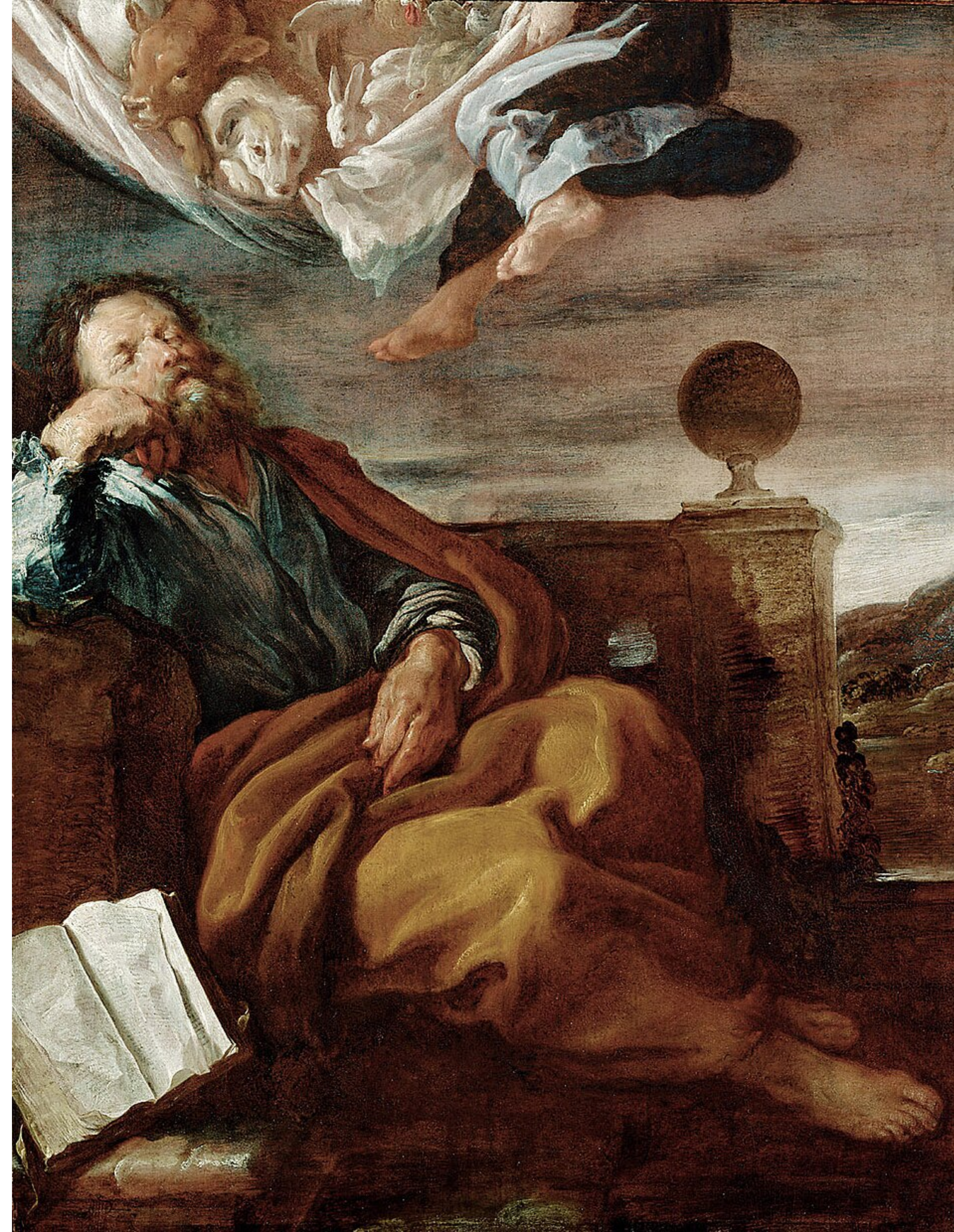
Now and Not Yet of the Gospel

New Covenant Promises Depicted in the Gospels and Acts

- **Restoration (Life of the Age to Come):**
 - Pentecost — Repentance (turning around) and heart circumcision/transplant/unification with God's Spirit
 - Spreading of the restoration, the land extended to the whole world — Repossession of the land and restoration of the kingdom of God (Israel)
 - Jesus's defeat of death and ascension as ruling over all other nations — Conquering other nations, blessing and peace with other nations
 - Jesus's community of caretakers — Healing from sickness
 - Sharing of all things — Flourishing and abundance
 - ??? — Reunification of the 12 tribes
 - 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)
 - Pentecost — Return of God to Zion
 - National and covenantal resurrection

Gentiles in Acts

What's Going On?



Peter and the Gentiles

Acts 10: Take and Eat

- Paul and Cornelius
- Animals of moral impurity representative of the nations (other ethnic groups)
- “Do not call profane (common) what I have called (morally) clean.”
- Not permission for Jewish people to eat morally unclean food, but a claim that God has transformed the status of gentiles in some way
- “You yourselves know that it is improper for a Jew to associate with or to visit a foreigner, but God has shown me that I should not call anyone (common) or (morally) unclean.”
- Flows from the logic that Jesus as King of Israel has defeated the gods of the nations: “Then God has given even to the gentiles the restoration that leads to (covenant) life.”



Saul/Paul the Pharisee

Representative to the Gentiles

- Saul is not “converted” to a new religion, but frames his faith around Jesus as Messiah of Israel
- *Acts 13* Saul and Baranabas go to synagogue to announce the restoration of Israel
- Commissioned to go to Gentile cities, sees they have God’s Spirit of Holiness, the hearts are transformed
- Saul seeks to make sense of this theologically

Paul's Gospel of Salvation

Language of Covenant Restoration and Rescue from the gods

Paul's Recounting of Jesus's Victory

Colossians 2

- Paul, a Pharisee, writing to Jewish and gentile followers of Jesus about the the covenant restoration:
 - “[The Messiah] is the head of every ruler and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision (of your hearts) by the Spirit, by the removal of the Messiah’s mortal body (a kind of circumcision), when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through trust in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And when you were dead in trespasses [failure of the Jewish people to follow biblical law] and the uncircumcision of your flesh [gentile exclusion from God’s covenant], God made you all alive together with him, when he forgave us all our disobedience, erasing the record that stood against us with its covenantal failure. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross [exhausting the covenant curses]. He disarmed the heavenly rulers and gods and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.”

Paul's Recounting of Jesus's Victory

Ephesians 2-3

- Paul, a Pharisee, writing to gentile followers of Jesus about their inclusion in the restoration:
 - “So then, remember that used to be called gentiles (by your birth), called “uncircumcised” by those “the circumcision” — physically — remember that you were at that time without the Messiah, being aliens from the people of Israel and foreigners to the covenant and its restoration], having no hope and without God in the world.

“But now in Messiah Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the [death] of the Messiah. For he is our reconciliation; in his mortal body, he has made both into one and has broken down the dividing wall, he abolished the enmity between us occasioned by [biblical] law with its instructions and decrees, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in from the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed reconciliation to you who were far off and reconciliation to those who were near, for through him both of us have access in one Spirit [the circumcision of our hearts] to the Father.

Paul's Recounting of Jesus's Victory

Ephesians 2-3

- “So then, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and also members of the family of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Messiah Jesus himself as the cornerstone; in him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together in the Spirit into a dwelling place for God....

“Of this gospel, I have become a servant according to the gift of God’s generosity that was given me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the holy ones, this generosity was given to me to bring to the gentiles the news of the boundless riches of the Messiah, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the now revealed mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the assembly [of the restoration], the multi-variety wisdom of God might now be made known to the heavenly powers and gods.”

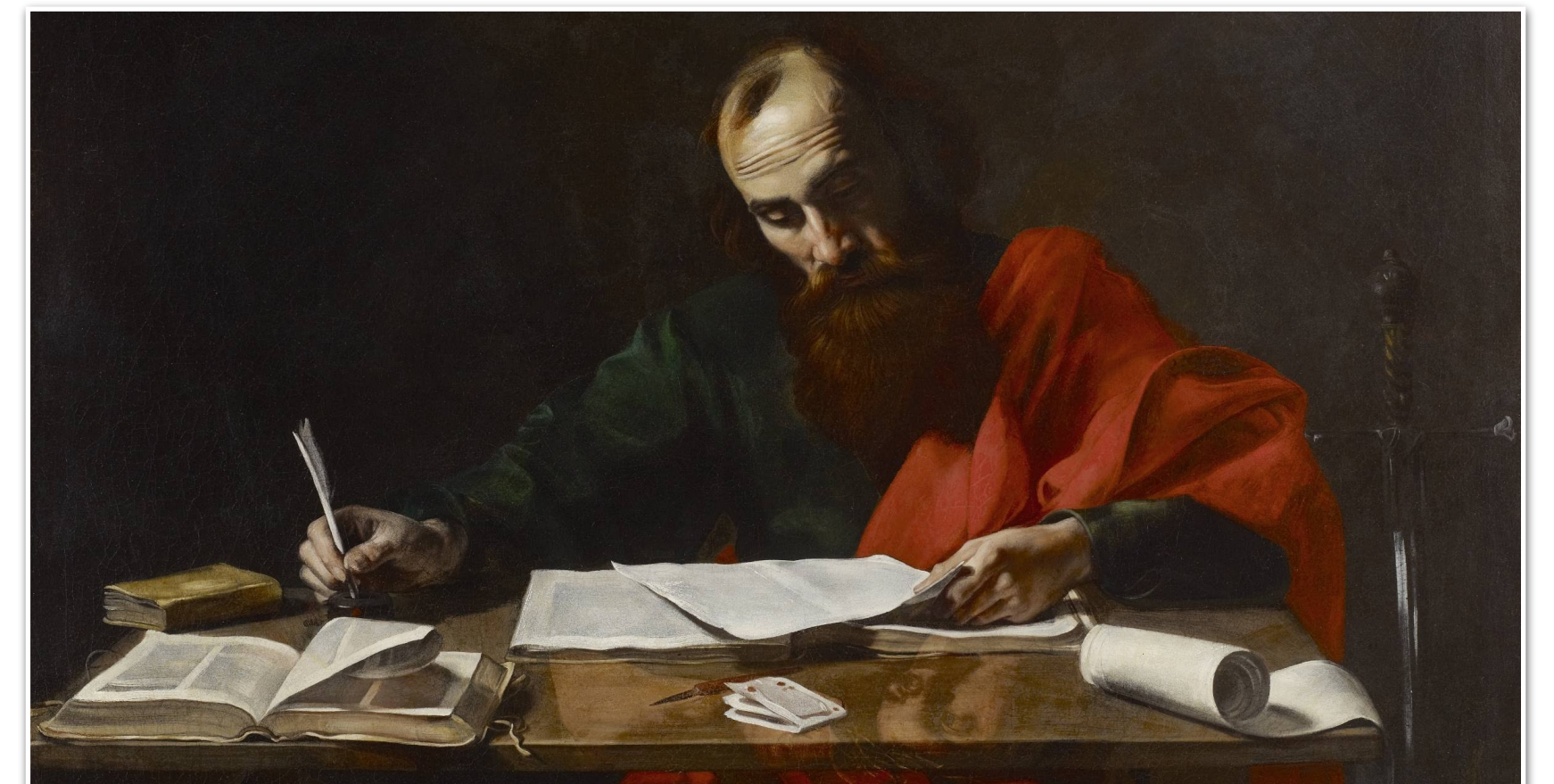
Is this Supersessionism?

Romans 11:1 – No Way!

ROMANS

Paul's *Mangum Opus*

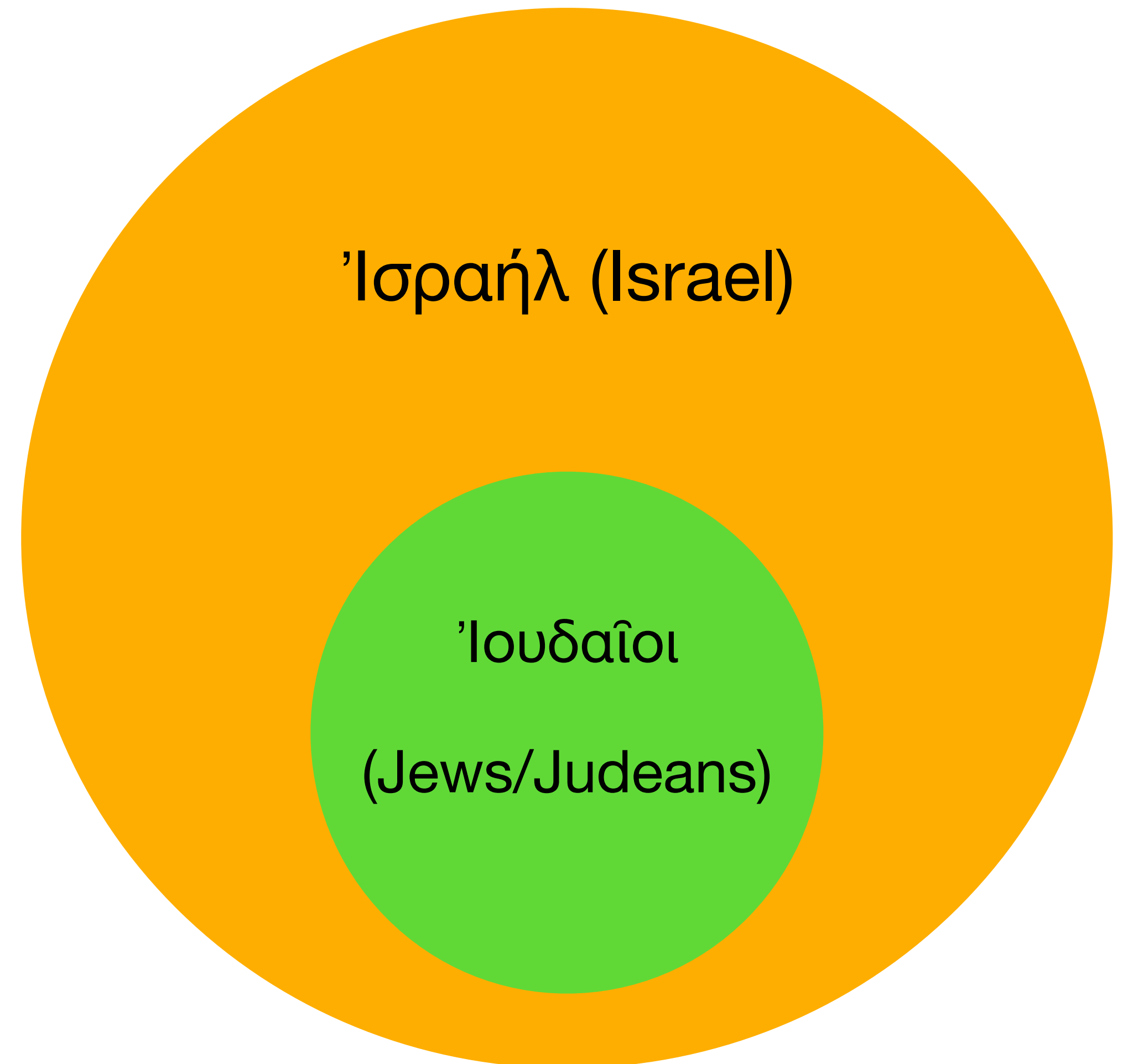
- A complex argument addressing Roman Jesus-following communities of Jews and gentiles
- Ethnic hostility seems to have arisen on both sides
- Paul lays out argument for full gentile inclusion AND faithfulness to the Jewish people as God's people
- His *midrash* and *halakha* is complex and highly debated
- Church still majority Jewish, gentiles included



What Is Israel? Who are the Jews?

Important Context

- (*Jason Staples*) In Paul, Philo, Josephus, vast majority of Second Temple texts:
 - Israel = Historical 12 tribes (occasionally Northern 10 tribes)
 - Jews/Judeans = Judahites (Southern tribes that survived exile)
 - 10 tribes assimilated in the diaspora



Who is Part of the Covenant Restoration?

Romans 1-2

- *Romans 1:18-32* “Israel was under the covenant curses (age of anger, under the “decree of biblical law”), those who persist in injustice continue under the curses.”
- Though God revealed himself to Israel, they acted like the nations and were handed over to their own desires, ending up in the same condition as the nations
- Judeans cannot judge where gentiles were, because they were under the same conditions
- God shows no favoritism, because both were subject to the powers and the reign of death (*2:11-12*)
- Evidence of membership in the covenant is not *having* covenant instructions but *doing* the covenant instructions
- *2:10-27* The glory of God is for anyone who does the instructions, circumcision of the flesh is of value as long as your heart is also circumcised; and if a gentile’s heart is circumcised, they must be members of the covenant restoration (*justified*)

Covenant Death Leads to Resurrection

Romans 3

- Is there benefit to being Judean and circumcised? Yes! (3:1) They have God's covenant instructions.
- Does Israel's failure to be faithful to God's instructions cause God to stop being faithful to them? No! (3:3-4)
- Was God unjust in bringing the covenant curses? No! (3:5-6)
- Israel's unfaithfulness and covenant death has made way for covenant resurrection, and enabled God to be faithful to restore Israel
- Are Judeans better off than other ethnic groups? No! (3:9-20)
- All were subject to "Sin"/Failure and death because of unfaithfulness to the covenant, all people groups fall short of God's glory, bragging is excluded (3:21-28)
- (3:29) Is God the God of Judeans only? No! (all Israel, and all nations)

Covenant Death Leads to Resurrection

Romans 3

- Messiah Jesus's faithfulness has circumcised hearts of Judeans and gentiles
- (3:31) Is biblical law abolished? No! Rather, it can be *accomplished!*

Covenant Death Leads to Resurrection

Romans 4-6

- The covenant inauguration and promises were given to Abraham before circumcision or earning of Abraham, but a gift from God based on Abraham's trust and faithfulness
- Through Messiah Jesus's trust and faithfulness, covenant restoration has been brought to Israel, rescue (salvation) from covenant death
- As Jesus has died to covenant death and slavery to "Sin", if you have been baptized, you have died to covenant death and are covenantally alive, and free from "Sin"
- Your mortal body is connected to God's divine life, so live in the Spirit (God's life/breath) and not your flesh (mortal body subject to death)

Covenant Death Leads to Resurrection

Romans 7-8

- The “decree of biblical law” = the covenant curses only rule a person while they live (like wedding vows), but not once they die
- We have been put to death in the Messiah’s death, and we are joined to his life by his Spirit (7:1-6)
- Is biblical law a failure? (7:7) Is biblical law bad because it brought us under covenant death (7:13) No!
- Biblical law is holy, a gift from God
- Inability to attain it has to do with existing in bodies subject to death, inhabiting “Sin”
- “Sin” takes advantage of biblical law, bringing the covenant curses onto God’s people

Covenant Death Leads to Resurrection

Romans 7-8

- We (Judeans) are no longer under the condemnation of biblical law (covenant curses), but are alive to the law of the Spirit (biblical law written on the heart)
- Now there is no condemnation (covenant curses) for those in (the death and resurrection of) the Messiah (8:1)
- Now, despite suffering (the curses), we grow in glory in the resurrection (8:23-30), now nothing can separate us from the hope and love of God

OK...But How Are Gentiles a Part of Israel's Covenant?

Romans 9

- Why doesn't the restoration look complete? Where is God's faithfulness to restore all the covenant promises (*including reuniting the 12 tribes*)?
- Northern Israel (10 tribes) rebelled against the covenant
- God works with Israel's rebellion like a master potter taking a distorted pot, and reshaping it for his purposes
- Mashing it up so he can re-mold it (*9:17-24*) allowing for other ethnic groups to enter
- Other ethnic groups have been gifted covenant membership in the restoration because of the rebellion of Northern Israel, NOT because they have been replaced (*9:30*)

OK...But How Are Gentiles a Part of Israel's Covenant?

Romans 9

- God's people in Northern Israel have become "not my people" and this nation has become "not-a-nation" by exile and assimilation (*quoting Hosea and Deut. 32 in 9:25-26; 10:20; 11:11*)
- (9:12) So there is no distinction between Judean and Greek, because both fell under the curses and under death

OK...But How Are Gentiles a Part of Israel's Covenant?

Romans 11 (Climax)

- Has God abandoned Northern Israel? No! (*11:1*)
- Israel died and became gentiles
- Was their death permanent? No! (*11:11*) Gentiles become Israel (NOT Judeans)
- As God was made jealous by Israel, God made Israel jealous with Judah
- He has brought all 12 tribes together, rescued all tribes of Israel (*11:25-27*) *by* resurrecting Northern Israel *by* including the gentiles in the covenant of Israel (all Israel has been saved)
- Like Joseph and Job, God works in his peoples' failures, and causes the death/suffering of one to bring resurrection and blessings to the many
- Grafting into the Olive Tree (*11:24*), gentiles cannot boast either

Live Out Reconciliation, or You Are Not Part of the Restoration

Romans 12-16

- The actual point of the letter
- Defer to each other
- Follow biblical law (love each other)
- Express your faithfulness to God in your ways, without judging another ethnic group, because you are only family

Galatians

- Similar, writing to gentile Christians that they do not have to become Judean to join the covenant restoration
- Their membership comes through circumcision of the heart by the Spirit
- Repossession of the land has been enlarged to possession of the renewed world
- Rule comes through suffering (death) and service (love)
- Because the restoration was a gift, there is no distinction or privilege in the renewed covenant based on ethnicity, sex, or legal status

How Does Biblical Law Apply Now?

Who Obeys What?

Biblical Law Written on the Heart

- In Exodus, Israelites not saved by performing biblical law, but rescued by God's generosity and compassion (through Moses)
- Biblical law is the description of the way of life faithful to God
- In the Jesus-movement, Jews and gentiles are not saved by performing biblical law, but rescued by God's generosity and compassion (through Jesus)
- Biblical law is *still* the description of the way of life faithful to God, and the standard is higher because with the Spirit, the people should be able to accomplish it, being transformed in union with God's life
- Similar to Hebrews' depiction of Messianic Jewish community



Justification by Grace through Faith and Not Works

How Did the Restoration Come About?

- Saved — Rescued from the powers/gods and covenant curses
- Justification — Renewed by God's Spirit, circumcision of the heart, membership in the restored covenant
- Grace — God's generosity (manifest in Jesus's death and resurrection, and the gift of the Spirit)
- Faith — Jesus's faithfulness to the covenant OR the community's allegiance to Jesus as Messiah
- Works of the (Biblical) Law — Actions from biblical law that display Jewish identity and faithfulness to the covenant instructions (Circumcision, Sabbath, Jewish festivals, Avoiding Food)
- Day of Justice (Judgment) — The day of resurrection where God makes everything right, renews creation, and brings justice based on actions (life lived)

Justification by Grace through Faith and Not Works

James

- James “Faithfulness to God with out acts of charity/justice are meaningless”
- We are justified by faith + works (faithfulness and action)
- Agrees with Paul, there was no “earning” the covenant restoration, but was a gift
- Restoration came through Jesus’s faithfulness to God (unto his death)
- Membership in the restored covenant comes through faithfulness/allegiance to the Messiah through embodied action
- Follow the “**Royal Law**” that doesn’t not **condemn**, but brings **freedom** (2:8-12)

Which Instructions Apply to Which People?

Acts 15

- KEY: Not all biblical laws apply to all people!
- Different instructions apply to priests, pregnant women, and different in different times and places
- Important, do not think gentiles are Jews, or vice versa, so faithfulness to God can look different
- Lev. 17-18: “Any Israelite or *foreigner*...”
- Love command (source of all biblical law)
No murder, retaliation, or economic oppression
Do not consume blood or food offered to idols, do not worship idols
Do not commit sex crimes
(Essentially, avoid moral impurity)

Which Instructions Apply to Which People?

1 Cor. 7:17-20

- “However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches. Was anyone at the time of his call circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but obeying the instructions of God is everything. Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called.”
- Different ways of faithfulness to God based on ethnicity, repeatedly charges not to judge or force ethnic assimilation
- Galatians (Do not force gentiles to become Jews)
- Acts 21 (Do not force Jews to become gentiles, economic supersessionism or “third race” theology)
- Ephesians 3 Diverse unity is the sign the gods/powers who cause ethnic enmity are no longer in control

Which Instructions Apply to Whom Today?

Halakha Today!

- Paul envisioned a majority Jewish church in his day
- He did not conceive of Jewish people stopping biblical instructions that applied to them, but did not force gentiles to become Jewish to obtain full covenant membership
- Messianic Jews, just like all Jewish denominations engage in Halacha about what is binding and instructive for today
- Paul (and Jesus) was not legalist, he was not antinomian
- Today, reading biblical law closely and halacka is needed to discern how to apply biblical law to different kinds of people in new contexts!

Conclusions to this Series

What's the Point?

- 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 Supersessionist**
- 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**

Discussion 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?