

# The Israel of God

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May the grace and peace of God be upon you!

## The Plan of God

One would think that God changes His plan as the history of humanity goes by, but the reality is that God has always had the same plan from the beginning—the salvation of humankind! In 1 Timothy 2:3-4 we read: *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.”*

The reality is that God does not enjoy when someone dies—no matter who he is. In Ezekiel 33:11, God says: *“As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.”* God from the beginning wanted us to **live** an eternal and abundant life—which we can see when we study the Feasts of God.

That’s why God gave Adam and Eve an abundant life in the Garden of Eden with access to the Tree of Life, which has the fruit to **eternal life**. They had access to everything without the need to work too hard. They had the beauty, fatness, and wealth of the land. They had the best of the best without having to pay for it. They didn’t even have to work to get their food—it was already prepared for them in Eden. All they had to do was tend and keep the garden (Gen. 2:15). How hard could that be? There was no stress and no worries—all they had to do was keep the garden! God wanted them to reproduce and let all of humanity enjoy this lifestyle **forever!**

They had a perfect life, just like God intended them to have, until they sinned. They despised the fruit of the eternal life through ignorance and disobedience, so God took away the access to eternal life from them. This applies to us today too! God will not grant you eternal life if you don’t value it—if you despise it. God wants you to desire and treasure the gift of eternal life!

As we study the covenants that God made with mankind, we will notice that the pacts were designed for our salvation. You will notice that He really wants you to have a joyful and eternal life but He also wants you to appreciate it first for what it really is. He wants you to understand how wonderful and amazing of a gift He offering us. Therefore, we ought to live in a state of eternal gratefulness towards our Creator for the gift of eternal life!

## The Old and New Covenant

God first established a pact with Israel on Mount Sinai where Israel was supposed to keep God’s Law and God was going to bless them immensely (Exo. 24:1-8). It was, symbolically speaking, a

marriage agreement between Christ (the Logos of God at that time) and Israel. The Messiah was the husband and Israel was the wife.

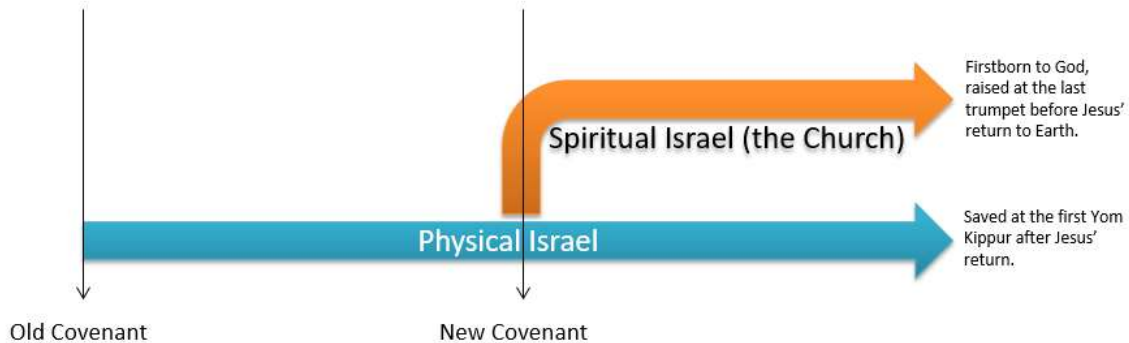
At the beginning, Israel **lived by the Law** and tried to do its best to keep the Law—so God blessed them in many ways for many generations. Eventually, the nation got away from God and started sinning—so curses followed. They started worshiping other gods and even sacrificing their sons to false gods, among many other sins. Symbolically speaking, in Christ’s relationship with Israel, when they worshiped other gods, it was like they committed adultery against the Logos. God even uses an analogy to describe Israel as a harlot in Ezekiel 16 and 23.

Because of Israel’s disobedience, Christ “divorced” ancient Israel (Jer. 3:8). So God allowed Israel to fall into captivity. But as we said earlier, God’s plan has always been to save Israel, and for that matter, the world too. So God made another covenant with Israel but this time the Gentiles (or non-Jews) could be part of it too. In this New Covenant, you have to have faith in Jesus Christ that His sacrifice and His grace are sufficient for your salvation. Now, **we live by faith**, trusting in Him, following Him, obeying Him, in short, living for Him with the help of the Holy Spirit in us. The New Covenant takes the Law of God from a physical level to a spiritual level; hence, giving the Law the spiritual depth and true meaning that it deserves.

Because of Israel’s disobedience, God **supplanted** the physical Israelites (that despised their access to eternal life through the rejection of the Messiah) with spiritual Israelites (or spiritual Jews). The spiritual Israelites/Jews are people of any nationality or race that desire to do God’s will and are believers of Christ. In Romans 2:28-29 we read, *“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”* Christians are, in the eyes of God, spiritual Jews. That doesn’t mean Gentiles have to forsake their heritage to follow Christ—it is a spiritual, inward matter.

This is a mystery that many people still today don’t fully understand. Apostle Paul explains it very well in the epistle of Romans. In Romans 9:6-8 we read: *“For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are seed of Abraham; but, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’ That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.”* So, under the New Covenant, the new nation of Israel is a spiritual one—not to be confused with the physical nation of Israel currently in the Middle East. These two nations (the spiritual and the physical) go in different directions today. The citizens of this spiritual nation desire to do God’s will and don’t “walk in the flesh” but follow and trust in the Messiah. They are called Christians or believers in Messiah. They are not just believers of Christ, they have been claimed by Christ to be His holy nation from among people of all nations. In a way, they are the best of mankind! **So today, by the grace of God and through the sacrifice of Yeshua, we all have access again to eternal life since the Fall of Man in Eden!** Today, our lineage is not important to be saved. Today, we are saved by the grace of God!

# Physical and Spiritual Israel



Paul uses an olive tree as an example to explain the supplantation of physical Israel. In Romans 11:11-27, the olive tree that he uses as an example represents the nation of Israel. The broken branches of the olive tree that Paul uses represent the physical Israelites that rejected God. Now, Paul talks about some new branches from a wild olive tree supplanting those that broke off—these are the Gentiles!

Paul confirms this again in Galatians 3:28-29. It reads: *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

Today, anyone can be a citizen of this nation in Heaven. Paul, in Ephesians 2:11-13, continues to explain: *“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you 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. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”* Then, in verse 19 he says: *“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”*

In Galatians 6:15-16, we read, *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”* At the close of the epistle, Paul calls the Church the *“Israel of God,”* which is a very fitting name. This is the new body of believers that have supplanted the unbelievers that had no faith in Christ. They are a group of chosen individuals from all races that have overcome the many trials that God has made them go through. They are a group of people that have been called out of this world to be the first fruits or firstborn to God. The firstborn children of God will be the first of mankind to be resurrected. **God has tried and tested the firstborn until they reach a state of spiritual maturity and spiritual completion so they can help lead the rest of mankind to God.** Because they are resurrected first, they will always be special to God, just like

a firstborn child will always be special to any parent. But as mentioned before, God desires salvation for all mankind. They will lead the way in the future Kingdom of God, being priests and kings, teaching and ruling justly. If you are reading this, it's because most likely you are being called to be a firstborn to God.

In 1 Peter 2:9, Apostle Peter says about the Israel of God: *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."* Today, the Tree of Life is now within our reach thanks to the sacrifice of our Lord, Jesus Christ! That's what the New Covenant has done for us; it brought us closer to that abundant and eternal life—it brought us closer to God! That is the **Good News** (or the Gospel) that Christ came to deliver!

With the New Covenant, Christ will marry again the Israel of God just before He returns to this Earth (Mat. 25:1-13; Rev. 19:7-9). Christ is preparing His wife right now for the wedding. One of the most beautiful things of the New Covenant is that everyone is welcome to have eternal life. In fact, Jesus used several parables to explain the supplantation of physical Israel for the Gentiles in Matthew 22:1-14 and Luke 14:15-24. As mentioned in the beginning, it would be easy to think that God changed His plan after ancient Israel sinned and then God decided to allow for this supplantation, but in reality, this was the plan of God from the beginning—God always desired the salvation of all mankind, not just one race! God is God of all of His Creation, not just one race!

This supplantation in a way supports the Replacement Theology, but there is danger to misunderstanding this idea. There is a "hard" and "soft" stance on Replacement Theology. The hard stance assumes that God has completely forgotten about the Jews. It assumes that they are condemned to hell, that they are a curse, and a pest to be avoided. With that mentality you start thinking that it's better to get rid of the Jews in our societies. And it is this mentality that has led to many persecutions of the Jews since the death of Christ.

The hard stance on Replacement Theology is first and foremost not of the true Christian spirit—God doesn't want us to think in such manner. Instead, God wants us to have a soft stance on Replacement Theology. And that is the idea that the Church is in fact the new chosen people of God and Gentiles have been grafted into the spiritual Israel of God. However, God has not forgotten about the Jews! Let's not forget that the Jews that believe are also included in this Israel of God (or the Church). Let's not forget that the Gospel was preached to the Jews first, and of course, the first believers were Jews. The leaders of the early Church were Jews. And of course, how can we forget that the Messiah was a Jew in the flesh. Even though Gentiles have supplanted some Jews (not all), the Jews are still a very special people in God's eye, and God will preserve them. God will preserve them not because of their great deeds, but because of the love that God has towards Abraham's physical descendants.

So the key here is not leaving behind the physical descendants of Jacob assuming God somehow forgot about them. No, they went first. If God called the Gentiles by grace, not by their deeds,

how can Gentiles boast? In the same manner, God has been and is currently calling physical Jews today by grace, certainly not by their works. That way, nobody can boast in the presence of God.

So God has not forgotten about the physical Jews. The Apostles (all Jews) serve as pillars to the Church even to this day with their deeds and writings. Furthermore, physical descendants of Jacob today are being called in historical numbers since the era of the Early Church—a deed that only God can perform! That serves as a witness to all believers that God is faithful in His promises and has not forgotten about the physical Jews.

What? Is God merciful to forgive the Gentiles but not the Jews? It is true that many physical Jews still don't believe but at the return of Christ, they will—along with many Gentiles that survive the Tribulation for that matter. In Zechariah 12:10-11 we read what will happen to physical Israel after the return of Christ, *“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”* Once physical Israel realizes that Jesus is, in fact, the Messiah, they will mourn bitterly. That mourning and repentance is reflected through the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). After their repentance, physical Israel will be saved after Christ's return.

### **Meanings and Symbolisms of the Covenants**

The first Covenant that God made with Israel was just a shadow of the real one that He would make later on with all of humanity. The first Covenant was just the physical version of the real one—the spiritual one!

God, in His infinite wisdom, created the physical things that we see on this Earth as copies of the real ones in the spirit world (Heb. 9:23-24; 10:1). Because we are physical, we can relate and understand better the spiritual things with physical examples.

God chose Abraham and his descendants as an example for us today so we can reach salvation. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was tested by God many times. God told him to move out of his country, and Abraham obeyed without even questioning. God told him to circumcise, and Abraham did so without questioning.

Also, God told him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, and just when he was about to do it, God stopped him. Then, in Genesis 22:16-18, God confirmed his pact with him saying: *“By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gates of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”*

Some people have always wondered why God tested Abraham in such a way. There is a huge symbolism in this story! Notice that in the scripture that we just read, God said that Abraham did not **withhold** his only son from Him. In the Law of God you will notice that the firstborn of every animal or person and the first fruits are of God (Exo. 13:2; 22:29). The reason God tested Abraham is because his descendants will become the firstborn or first fruits of God—Jesus being the Firstborn of all the firstborn. Symbolically speaking, in order for his descendants to become the firstborn to God, Abraham had to let them go and not **withhold** them. Out of the seed of Abraham would come the firstborn of God, symbolically speaking.

Notice also that in Genesis 22:18, God promised Abraham that in his descendants all the nations of the Earth will be blessed. Like Apostle Paul clearly explains in Galatians 3:8, the Gentiles benefited from the New Covenant in that they can inherit the promises to Abraham; therefore, the nations of the world (the Gentiles) are benefiting today from these promises.

Isaac then had twins. The first one to be born was called Esau and the second one was called Jacob. Therefore, the birthright belonged to Esau, but as we can read in Genesis 25:29-34, Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a simple stew! In verse 34 we read, *“Thus Esau despised his birthright.”* Again, there is a lot of symbolism in this story! Esau despised his birthright for something so small; on the other hand, Jacob valued and wanted it really bad. The symbolism here is that, as we will see with the New Covenant, it really does not matter whether you are physically born first, it doesn’t matter if you are in line for an inheritance, it doesn’t matter your heritage—under the New Covenant, if you desire it, you can be a firstborn to God! Simple as that!

Later on, we read in Genesis 27, how Isaac called on Esau to bless him. Isaac told Esau to hunt a game and cook a savory food so they could eat together, and after that, bless him. Isaac’s wife, Rebekah, was hearing and told her son Jacob to disguise as Esau to get the blessing of the birthright while Esau was hunting. Jacob obeyed his mother and disguised himself before Isaac as Esau. Isaac couldn’t tell that well because he was blind due to his age. Therefore, Isaac gave the birthright blessing to Jacob instead of Esau.

Now, what’s the symbolism there? Jacob supplanted Esau as the firstborn! It’s no coincidence that the very name Jacob means “supplanter” (Gen. 27:36) because he supplanted his brother twice! Again, the symbolism is that it is of no importance your lineage, your social status, if you were the firstborn in your family or not; you can still have access to eternal life if you want **by becoming a firstborn to God through faith in Jesus**. Same with ancient Israel, they had the promises of the blessings of God but when they turned against God, they showed God that they despised Him and His blessings, and then God supplanted some of them with Gentiles.

You see, we are all sons of God, technically. Angels and fallen angels too. We are all a creation of God; therefore, we are all natural sons of God. But we are not all spiritual sons of God—which is more important! At some point, as we mature, we all need to make a conscious choice of whether we want to follow, obey, and submit to God—or not. When we do submit to God, we

actually become born of the Spirit—or become spiritual sons of God. At some point, Satan and the fallen angels made a decision to rebel against God. So they may be naturally sons of God but in spirit (which is what matters), they aren't. The scripture calls all who rebels against God sons of Satan (1 John 3:10; Acts 13:10). So all who rebel against God are naturally sons of God, but spiritually, they are the sons of Satan!

It works in a similar manner with nations too. Ancient Israel was naturally the firstborn nation of God (Exo. 4:22) but when they sinned, they lost the preeminence (birthright). Now, those who believe in Jesus are born of the Spirit and have become part of a spiritual nation (and have acquired the birthright). Therefore, being born of the Spirit is more important than your natural birth. The same happened with the story of Esau and Jacob. Esau being naturally the firstborn despised his birthright, so God gave it to Jacob who desired it. And that story of Esau and Jacob was a shadow of what would happen to physical and spiritual Israel too. It shows that God cares more about our spiritual condition than our physical/natural condition.

In Genesis 32:22-32, we read another story where Jacob fights Christ all night. In verse 28 we read that Christ said to Jacob after wrestling: *"Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."* The symbolism here is that Israel, both the physical and the spiritual one, have struggle with God thru their journey. Ancient Israel disobeyed God many times, and for that they were punished. We, as Christians, have disobeyed God many times—and for that we have been punished too. Also, God tested ancient Israel many times—in the same manner, God has tested Christians too. And thru all the struggles, trials, persecution, and tribulation, just like Jesus overcame the world (John 16:33), those who are His shall overcome too (1 John 5:1-5), and inherit the name of Israel. The more you think about it, the more you realize that **the name of Israel represents who we are—those who have prevailed before God!**

Later on, Joseph, one of Israel's sons, is sold by his brothers into slavery. Joseph ended up in Egypt, and in time, with God's help, he became the second in command in Egypt. Eventually, there is famine in all the land and Joseph's brothers came to Egypt asking for food. Joseph forgave his brothers and told them to move to Egypt. All of this is part God's plan because we know that in time God will deliver Israel from Egypt. Even Joseph knew that because he prophesied in Genesis 50:24: *"I am dying, but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."*

The Israelites became slaves in Egypt, so God raised Moses to deliver them. Moses then became a type of Christ, as we can read in Exodus 7:1 *"So the Lord said to Moses: 'See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.'"* If you think about it, Moses delivered Israel from their slavery in Egypt, just like Jesus delivered us from our **slavery to sin** by His sacrifice. Apostle Paul explains this very well in Romans 6:5-6; it reads: *"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might*



*be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*" Again, Moses' story is just a symbolism of the real story—Jesus' story.

Moses, through the powerful hand of God, delivered Israel from Pharaoh, the most powerful man on the Earth at that time. Then, God made a covenant with Israel in Mount Sinai—the Old Covenant (Exo. 24:1-8). The symbolism here is the same as when you get baptized. When you are called by God to follow His Way, it's the equivalent to God taking you out of the world or Egypt in a symbolic way. Then, it's not a matter of just leaving Egypt behind, you need to repent too! Repent means to completely change! Actually, the Greek word for repent, *metanoeho*, comes from the word of metamorphosis, which literally means "to transform after." When you accept Jesus' sacrifice for the remission of your sins and you get baptized, **you are making a covenant with God** that you will live His Way from now on and leave your old ways (Egypt's way) behind you. This is the New Covenant! After baptism, the ministers of God will lay their hands on you so you can receive the Holy Spirit—and the Holy Spirit will guide you to live God's Way of life!

After Israel made the covenant with God, they wandered in the desert for 40 years before they entered the Promised Land—and the Promised Land, in a symbolic way, represents the Kingdom of God. They wandered in the desert with many trials and even wars. It was not easy for them travel through the desert for that long period of time. God punished them, and God blessed them.

Similarly, we as Christians, go through a whole lifetime of trials and tests before entering the Kingdom of God as sons of God. We fight the world because we are going against the traditions of it; and in doing so, we fight a spiritual war with Satan and his demons because Satan is the ruler of this current world. In 1 John 2:15-17 we read: *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."*

Satan, being the ruler of this world (Ephe. 2:2; Rev. 12:9), is at constant war with us; and to that, Paul says that Christians should wear their **spiritual armor** to fight Satan and his armies (Ephe. 6:10-20). It's a difficult life, the one of a Christian, represented very accurately by a tribe of people wandering in the hot sun of the desert for a lifetime.

Also, notice that the Israelites did not own any possessions while they were in the desert, they lived in tents. The symbolism of that is that while Christians live in many countries around the world, we are not really part of those nations, but our loyalty is to the Israel of God—a nation in Heaven (Ephes. 2:19; 1 Peter 2:9). Christians are more like **ambassadors** of the Kingdom of God in those physical nations that they live in (2 Cor. 5:20).

Furthermore, notice that the Israelites did not have food in the desert. They had to rely and trust in God for food. God provided for them the manna that came from heavens and always



provided the water that they needed. Same applies to Christians today; we have to trust that God will provide all of our physical needs.

In Matthew 6:25-33, Christ says: *“Therefore I say to you, **do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the fields, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**”*** Christ could have not said it any better!

Also, on a spiritual level, God provides the spiritual food that we need to survive—that is, the **bread of life** which Jesus represents (John 6:47-58). When we partake of the Communion, we partake of Jesus’ sacrifice (Mat. 26:26-28), as a spiritual symbolism that we accept and are very thankful for His sacrifice for us. When we partake of the Communion, Christ enters and dwells in us through the Holy Spirit. We become One with God when we partake of the Communion! As God lives in us, He provides direction in our lives thru the Holy Spirit and His word.

Ultimately, (although there are many more symbolisms in the Old Testament that serve as admonitions and lessons for Christians today) we should know that ancient Israel entering the Promised Land represents Christians overcoming every trial and entering the Kingdom of God. Apostle Paul talks about a transformation in us, whether we are alive or dead, at the sound of the last trumpet (shofar) where we are going to cease being corruptible human beings and turn into incorruptible spiritual beings (1 Cor. 15:50-58). Hence, we will be glorified firstborn children to God once we enter the Promised Land!

This is the so called **first resurrection**. Not all humans will partake of this first resurrection, only the Christians that have overcome this world. Blessed and holy is the one who partakes of the first resurrection. We should all desire to be in the first resurrection—it’s a special honor among all of humanity! That’s why in the Law (Torah) in the Old Testament you read a lot about first fruits and firstborn belonging to God because they represent the Christians that will be in the first resurrection.

When Christ comes back to this Earth, He will establish a righteous world government. Just like any kingdom, Christ will need rulers across all the regions of the world. He will also need judges and priests, and these positions will be given to those in the first resurrection. Think about it, these Christians have been tested and proven for these positions—they have been tested for a

lifetime! They didn't fail God with all the trials of this life; they will not fail God for the rest of eternity!

In Matthew 19:28, Jesus tells the apostles that they will rule over the 12 tribes of Israel. In similar manner, there will be positions of leadership needed throughout the world. Christ will need to fill these positions—and there are many positions in the Kingdom of God (John 14:2-3).

Many of the mysteries of God had been revealed to us through the Holy Spirit in these end-times! At this time, God is choosing a group of people to prepare them for the future Kingdom of God. Notice in John 15:16 that Jesus says: ***"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give to you."*** God wants you to be a firstborn to Him (a son of God), and **today** is the day of salvation for you if you are saved yet!

### **A Blessing to All Nations**

The Christian that overcomes and inherits the Kingdom of God will help restore this Earth. They will guide the humans living in those days (the survivors of the Great Tribulation) to rebuild this world. The saints will guide the world into walking in the Way of God—and love, safety, and peace will abound in those days! It will be a time of world peace like humans have never seen before since the beginning of times (Isa. 2:4). A world where there are no wars? Sounds unbelievable but if God prophesies about it, it will surely happen!

The saints will guide the humans in those days to salvation because, as mentioned in the beginning, God desires all souls to be saved. The saints will teach mankind how to become One with God. In those days, all the countries of the world will benefit from this government of Christ and His saints. The spiritual nation of Israel will lead all the other countries into salvation and holiness. The spiritual nation of Israel will be one composed of kings and priests (1 Pet. 2:9).

In these times of the end, God is preparing a special people to rule and lead the way in the Kingdom of God. God is preparing a holy nation of kings and priest to teach the Way of God to the world. This nation will be a firstborn to God—and just like a firstborn leads the way among his siblings, this nation will lead all other nations to God. This nation is the Israel of God!

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