

The Second Exodus (Part Two)

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While the *sequence* of prophesied latter-day events seems to be fairly straightforward—the captivity and scattering of Israel; the tribulation of Jacob's Trouble; God's intervention on behalf of the remnant of Jacob; the Second Exodus back to the Promised Land; the reunification of Israel and Judah; God's restoration and blessing of His covenant people—the *timing* is a large unknown. It is unclear when these events will begin, nor is it entirely certain how long their aggregate duration will be. Even so, Isaiah 27:13 gives a clue regarding when the Second Exodus will begin:

So it shall be in that day: *the great trumpet will be blown*; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem. (Emphasis ours throughout)

The context is "[the] children of Israel" being "gathered one by one" (verse 12). "They . . . who are about to perish" seems to refer to the peoples of Israel enduring the time of Jacob's Trouble. The turning point, then, and the beginning of deliverance, is when "the great trumpet will be blown." The Olivet Prophecy correlates to this, for Jesus Christ says,

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels *with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect* [chosen people] *from the four winds*, from one end of heaven [the Greek word is plural— "heavens"—referring to things within earth's atmosphere (e.g., "the four winds") rather than to the heaven of God's throne] to the other. (Matthew 24:30-31)

The trumpet is a symbol of considerable consequence in the Old and New Testaments. In general, it can signify an alarm of war, a call to assemble, or a command to march (see Numbers 10:1-10). The fourth annual holy day is the Feast of Trumpets, a "memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation" (Leviticus 23:24; Numbers 29:1). Psalm 81:3-5 indicates Joseph was released from prison in Egypt on the Feast of Trumpets, making for rich symbolism regarding the future release of Israelite captives. God, through the prophets, often uses "Joseph" to represent, not just Ephraim and Manasseh, but also all of Israel (see Ezekiel 37:16-19; Amos 5:6, 15; 6:6; Obadiah 18; Zechariah 10:6). In addition, God caused the walls of Jericho to fall after seven successive days of trumpets sounding (Joshua 6:4-20).

Various end-time prophecies show that a trumpet precedes the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:1; Zechariah 9:14-16), when Jesus Christ returns as King of kings and overthrows the nations of this world, establishing the Kingdom of God on earth. The resurrection from the dead is also connected to a mighty trumpet blast (I Corinthians 15:52; I Thessalonians 4:16). While the book of Revelation tells of *seven* trumpets (Revelation 8:2—11:15), when the *last* one sounds, "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15), indicating He has returned. This all shows that the timing of the Second Exodus in general corresponds to the return of Christ.

Justice and Mercy

After the peoples of Israel have endured the chastening of Jacob's Trouble, they will be liberated and brought back to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:

"For it shall come to pass in that day," says the Lord of hosts, "that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up [resurrect] for them. Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob," says the Lord, "Nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you," says the Lord, "to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished." (Jeremiah 30:8-11)

In all of God's dealings with Israel and Judah, and especially regarding the Second Exodus, we see His perfect application of justice and mercy. He is just, because He does not allow their sin to go unpunished. We could not trust God if He did not hold to His promises of blessing and cursing (Numbers 23:19; Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28). If He allowed Israel and Judah to sin with impunity, His laws would have no authority, and His words would be of no consequence. However, for the sake of what is best for Jacob, God has to show him that He is serious about what He says. So His justice will be upheld as Israel and Judah are brought to the painful realization that they have forsaken Him and have been living the wrong way.

Yet, we can also see God's mercy in His dealings with His people. Today's Western culture—a product of the nations of Israel—is not so very different from Sodom and Gomorrah. The same sins are committed in the same brazen manner. Our regard for humanity is so low that in America alone during the last three decades, an estimated 40-50 million pre-born children have been killed for the sake of convenience. Further, God has been systematically removed from schools, from government, and from public life. Post-Christian Europe has transgressed even further. Even Jerusalem—the "Holy City"—has an annual "Gay Pride" parade, and is essentially secular.

Despite these atrocious sins, God will not utterly destroy Israel as He did to Sodom and Gomorrah. A number of latter-day prophecies of various peoples—the Edomites, for example—foretell that God *will* make a complete end of them (Jeremiah 46:28). However, He has chosen not to do this with Israel and Judah, though not because they are righteous in any way.

He will show them mercy because of the promises He made, not because they deserve it. Ezekiel 36 shows this clearly. God repeats several times that He is bringing Israel back for *His* name's sake, and not for Israel's sake:

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I do not do this [restoring Israel and blessing the land; verses 6-15] for your sake, O house of Israel, but *for My holy name's sake*, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord," says the Lord God, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. . . . Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good;

and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. *Not for your sake do I do this,*" says the Lord God, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!" (Ezekiel 36:22-24, 31-32)

God would be unfaithful to His own promises if He annihilated Jacob's descendants—even though, by all accounts, it is exactly what they deserve.

Peace and Prosperity

After Jacob is chastened, God will demonstrate His mercy and providence:

Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will bring back the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; the city shall be built upon its own mound, and the palace shall remain according to its own plan. Then out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of those who make merry; I will multiply them, and they shall not diminish; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as before, and their congregation shall be established before Me; and I will punish all who oppress them." (Jeremiah 30:18-20)

God will destroy the nations to which Israel and Judah are scattered, and He will correct Israel and Judah in measure, as verse 11 says. But when the punishment is done, He will bring His people back to the land that He promised them and give them rest and peace. A number of other prophecies concerning the Second Exodus relate how God will bless the land, which will once again produce abundantly. Israel and Judah will have the Promised Land, they will have peace—because this time their enemies will be completely destroyed, which Israel failed to do the first time—and they will have prosperity. They will also be blessed numerically, as the remnant begins to multiply.

But this time the peace and prosperity will last, because two factors will be different. First, Israel and Judah will have perfect leadership: Jesus Christ will be King, and David will be His prince (Ezekiel 37:24-25; Jeremiah 23:3-7; Hosea 3:5; Micah 2:12-13). Corrupt or ambivalent leadership will no longer lead Israel astray; instead, the leaders will set the example of righteousness for the people to follow. Additionally, the twelve original apostles will be resurrected and sit as judges over the twelve tribes, ensuring that proper judgment is given (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30).

Second, Israel and Judah will both make the New Covenant, meaning that they will be given the Holy Spirit, which will enable them to keep the law in its spiritual intent (Jeremiah 31:31-34). They will be given a new heart, and will finally be able to know their God (Ezekiel 11:17-20; 36:24-29).

Peace on God's Terms

Lest the grievous reality of Jacob's Trouble stray too far from his reader's mind, Jeremiah again cites the coming judgment for sin:

Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goes forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; it will fall violently on the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord will not return until He has done it, and until He has performed the intents of His heart. *In the latter days you will consider it.* (Jeremiah 30:23-24)

These verses actually repeat Jeremiah 23:19-20 almost word for word. This repetition is significant because Jeremiah 23 is a warning against false prophets. In particular, it is about men, claiming to speak for God, who tell the people—whose lives deny God—that, "The Lord has said, 'You shall have peace.'" These prophets say to the people, who were walking according to the dictates of their own hearts, "No evil will come upon you." In essence, they deny God's justice, and the fact that sin has consequences. They are telling the people not to worry about God's judgment upon them—everything would be fine; no change of course would be necessary.

However, the people, in reality, have declared war on God and His way of life through the conduct of their own lives. Whether or not they realize it, their carnal minds hold great enmity for God's way of doing things. They can never have peace with God until they repent and change.

God always desires peace, but if the sinning party is unwilling to face reality and repent, then His response will be a painful one. There will be peace with God only when the sinner is broken and submits to God. Yet, the false prophets insinuate that God does not care and that it does not matter how one lives. Nevertheless, these verses show that God destroys those who promote the idea that sin does not have consequences, who say God's justice is of little concern. These ideas keep getting Israel—indeed, all of mankind—into trouble.

The symbol of the whirlwind, then, represents God's fury and anger. Just as no man can control or divert a tornado or hurricane, so God's anger at the sin of the wicked cannot be resisted. It will continue until He has performed the intents of His heart. In the latter days, which we are in, God says we will consider it, meaning that Israel and Judah have not yet learned this lesson. However, when that chastening is over, Israel and Judah will be restored to the land, and, more importantly, they will be reconciled to God and able to live in peace.

A Happy Ending

Jeremiah 31 continues chapter 30, and it contains the proverbial "happy ending" as a humbled Israel and Judah are reconciled to God, who blesses them physically and spiritually:

"At the same time," says the Lord, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people." Thus says the Lord: "The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness—Israel, when I went to give him rest." The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel! You shall again be adorned with your tambourines, and shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice. You shall yet plant vines on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant and eat them as ordinary food." (Jeremiah 31:1-5)

After God performs the intents of His heart, as it says at the end of the previous chapter, and His wrath has consumed those He will consume, then peace in the relationship between Israel and God becomes possible because all of those who declared war on God through their conduct are dead. God does not believe in "peace at any price." He works toward repentance, but if there is no repentance, the only solution is to destroy those in rebellion against Him. Yet, after the destruction, He promises once again to be the God of all of Israel, and Israel will again be His people.

Verse 2 provides the qualifier that the remnant will be those who have survived the sword. Ezekiel 5:1-4 illustrates this time:

And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber's razor, and pass it over your head and your beard; then take scales to weigh and divide the hair. You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around it with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind: *I will draw out a sword after them.* You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment. Then take some of them again and throw them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will go out into all the house of Israel.

From these verses and the remainder of Ezekiel 5, it is evident that a great deal of violence will be done to the peoples of Israel, but when it is over, God will give them rest (Jeremiah 31:2). The people who survive the sword will find grace. God begins to demonstrate His lovingkindness and to rebuild and restore Israel. Jeremiah 31:4 contains the imagery of a festive occasion with dancing, something that the Israelites probably will not have felt like doing for quite some time. There will be food in abundance, and the time of famine will be over (verse 5). On all counts, Israel's outlook is brightening.

For thus says the Lord: "Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, 'O Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel!' Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and the one who labors with child, together; a great throng shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn. Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.' For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he." (Jeremiah 31:7-11)

By the time these verses are fulfilled, something critical has happened. We do not know exactly how or when, but this passage hints that the peoples of Israel once again know who they are. They no longer believe themselves to be Gentiles. Israelites understand that they are God's people, and this is cause for "singing with gladness" and giving praise.