

The Doctrine Of Israel (Part Fourteen): Israel Redeemed

The Fulfillment of Atonement

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Many of you know that I am a bit of a sports fan and I have been since I was a little kid. As a native Pittsburgher—I was two when we left—but the black and the gold was already a part of my inner nature. I bleed black and gold. I am a Yinzer.

Anyway, I watched the Pirates and the Steelers from far away Los Angeles and Columbia, South Carolina and like every kid back then I really wanted, I dreamed of making it to the big leagues in baseball. It was not a wholly realistic dream, although I could play well enough, but I knew that I was not exceptional, and of course the Sabbath; to a kid of that age who had such dreams, it was a dark cloud, you knew you could never make it that far by keeping the Sabbath. So I put that dream away.

I was also aware that no matter how much a kid wanted to make it to the major leagues, the process of getting there was extremely arduous. Kids would start in the Peewee leagues (or this is at least how it was in Columbia, South Carolina) after Tee ball. In Tee ball, you hit the ball off a tee. You finally got pitched to in Peewee and then you got up to Little League. Then you went to Pony League and Colt League and some of them were also playing on high school teams; and after that you had one of two options, essentially. Either be drafted by a major league team and sent to the minors or you could go on and play college.

But each time a player advanced to the next level of competition, the number of qualified players was whittled down, sometimes drastically. Some of it was lack of interest. They finally had enough and wanted to do something else. Sometimes it was a lack of time because they were interested in other things or the parents could not spend the time taking the kid around to wherever you needed to go. But of course to some of it was lack of talent. They would reach a certain point, certain level in the leagues, and the Peter Principle would begin to apply. They reached the level of their incompetence

and they could no longer play. The quality of play rose as each new league weeded out the wannabes from the more gifted kids.

You know, about half a million American young people play some college or university sport and they are considered to be top athletes in whatever discipline they choose. But only a select few of them rise into the major leagues or into the professional ranks. (I should put it that way.) Now this was kind of surprising when I looked it up. Almost 10% of college baseball players make it as a professional. I thought that was high and then I started to find out why. That is because major league baseball has three minor leagues and they have got baseball teams that one can go to all over the world—Korea, Japan, down into Central and South America. There is a lot of baseball being played around the world. So people who do not make it here can hitch a ride down to Costa Rica or go to the Dominican Republic or someplace, and they can play and hone their skills and hope that maybe one day they will be able to come back to the US and play for the major leagues. So they have a lot of a lot of places where people can go. So 10% is not bad.

Hockey is very similar. Seven point four percent of college hockey players make it into a professional hockey league. That is because hockey too has a lot of minor leagues and you can go play in Canada where it is the national pastime or you could go play it over in Russia or Finland or a lot of other places where they know what ice is. And so they can play hockey.

But it is different with football players and with basketball players. Did you know that an NCAA football player has only a 1.6% chance of playing professionally in the National Football League? The college game *is* the National Football League's minor league. There are no leagues in between. People have tried USFL and other places—XFL—and they fold very quickly. So there is not a lot of places for these young athletes to play.

It is even worse for major basketball players. The NBA and the WNBA and a few teams around the world offer professional basketball, but teams are not that big. You have got five guys on the court and usually there is about eleven or so on a team and very, very few other places to play. So only 1% of college basketball players ever play professionally.

Now, this whittling or winnowing process is not confined to sports, obviously. In one form or another, it is used everywhere: in academics, in industry, in commerce, in medicine, the military, agriculture, you name it. In every place there is a whittling out of those who are not competent. And to reach the highest levels in those particular areas, there is a process of somebody judging the merits of the person and saying, no, you really can't go any further. And like I said, the Peter Principle begins to apply. Not everyone or everything is fit for a certain job, for a certain position, or for a certain function. I mean, good luck pounding that nail in with your saw.

That is the sort of thing. If you reach a point where your function must be something other than what you are being asked to do because it just does not work. I mean, if you wanted to go out and shoot hoops with a small boulder, I think you would figure out that that is not what it was made for. And then if you go and stuff a leather bag full of straw and try the same thing, it is not going to work well either.

I think that is kind of what they did at the very beginning. It was kind of just a leather ball stuffed with straw and over a process of time, over 100 years, they figured out that you take a rubber bladder that is very round and you put air into it and you cover it with either leather or some sort of synthetic material and hey, you can play a really good game with that. Kick the boulder off to the side, kick the leather ball stuffed with straw, put it in a museum somewhere. It just does not work as well for a basketball.

The same thing happens with things like, you would not want a longshoreman to work on your teeth. You would probably prefer to have someone who has actually gone to school, done some dental work, passed a few tests, got a license, and practices, practices, and practices, and practices a lot on their patients before they get to you. You probably want a dentist or an orthodontist or some sort of oral surgeon, depending on your problem.

In the same vein, you would probably not want to eat bread milled from a whole stock of wheat. Hey, if you were out to get your fiber that would be great. I mean, you got the whole thing there. But bringing grain from field to flour is a rigorous process. It is not easy to do and it eliminates the whole stock, the husk, the shaft, and even most of the bran so that you are left with

just a small amount of what you actually use in bread. And this is done through a process of threshing, winnowing, grinding the grain, and for a higher quality flour, it has to be sifted many times until you get just the finest particles, and it is those finest particles put into the recipe that produce the richest breads and pastries. And so from one grain or one stock with several grains on it, you come down to just a small amount of flour that is fit for some people's palates. Some people can take the rougher stuff, but most of us enjoy the really fine stuff.

Now God uses a similar process in preparing people for jobs, jobs that He wants them to perform. He though, is looking for spiritual qualities, not physical ones, not necessarily skills or talents. He is more interested in the attitude of people and their willingness to obey and to submit to Him. He works to develop traits like love and faith, humility and kindness, loyalty and submission, and reverence and obedience, and joy and forbearance, and for self-control. People with these qualities can be trusted to do whatever He wants them to do or needs them to do. He can give them a job and they will do their best to get it done.

Eventually He is going to put all humanity through this process so they can become genuine sons and daughters. That is His goal. He wants to mill everyone down to the fine flour, as it were. And soon, and I hope it is soon, God will begin to put the people of Israel through this character development process.

In my last sermon, we saw that it needed to begin with a harrowing punishment, because Israel's sins had been mounting so high, they had become such a heavy burden that they weighed down even God. He felt that He was weighed down by their sins. That is what it says there in the book of Amos. But the process does not end with the punishment. There is a whole lot more that has to happen. In fact, the punishment of Israel is only the beginning. It is a necessary beginning, but it has to be done, of course.

And then He gets onto the other things that are as equal or more important than that. And a significant step in this process is paying for and carrying away the sins of the humble remnant. Once they get to the point where they are humbled, then there has to be a way to redeem them and forgive them, because without that, the process stops. They need that at that time. So Israel

will be humbled because of all their sins, they will have to be punished for that. But then soon after, God will provide for redemption for that humbled remnant.

Let us begin today in Scripture in Isaiah 1. Now, one thing I want to mention as we begin here in Isaiah 1, is that not only is Isaiah 1 the introduction to the book of Isaiah, but this opening passage provides an overview, we could say, of the main concern for Israel for all time, at least in this time, the time of humanity while Satan is around and causing all the problems that he causes. We could say that as in Isaiah's day, so in ours. It is the same concerns that God mentions here through Isaiah, that happened then and now He is concerned about the same or similar type of things. So this is a good introductory chapter to all of prophecy. That is the way it works. All prophecy, I should say, that centered around Israel, and most of it is.

Isaiah 1:2-9 Hear O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider."

Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward. Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints, from the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment.

Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; strangers devour your land in your presence; and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. So the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a hut in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah.

So, in this opening passage here, God, calling on heaven and earth as witnesses, voices His exasperation with Israel for their constant rebellion and their lack of understanding of Him, even though He has tried time and time again to help them. He taught them, He nourished them, He provided for them like a loving father all along the way, from the very beginning. He has never stinted with Israel. He has given them what they needed to do the job.

He says, animals, brute beasts exhibit more sense than Israel. They are pigheaded, really. He is telling us here that the fault is entirely theirs, it is not His. He has done everything to give them what they needed, but they would never turn to Him. And this is kind of, then, just a reiteration of what we saw there in the book of Judges; that Israel has this constant cycle of sin and rebellion and He brings them back after a while and He teaches them good things through an able leader and then they sin again and they rebel and it just goes on and on and on and on.

As I have been emphasizing, their problem was sin and a lot of it! Even here, Isaiah, or God actually, talks about sin being a heavy burden, a heavy weight, a weighing down of the whole nation. They do not understand how much their accrual of sin stultified them, it just stops them in their tracks. There is no growth, there is soon regression, and it is just all downhill from there. They need somehow for those sins to be lifted off of them. You could say they are covered over with their sins and they need to be covered with the blood of Jesus Christ. He says here, but they and their children are evil.

I have emphasized in this series, they do not know how to do right. They do not even have good conception of right and wrong. He says here that the children even are corrupters. They corrupt other people and they are, even though they protest otherwise, anti-God. They are all me, me, me and all that they want, and they are very willing to throw God over in order to get what they want.

There is no end to their rebellion, He says. They are completely diseased. They are corrupted by sin from head to toe. It affects every level of the nation. No one gets a pass.

So in verses 7-9, God prophetically describes the result of all those horrible evils. Both city and countryside are burned, ruined, and empty. Invaders

roam the land and take away everything of value. Only one small area, that cucumber hut in the yard there, is all they have left. Just maybe a small city is left and there the remnant huddles in fear and desperation. If it were not for those few, the nation would be annihilated, and as He says here, it would be like Sodom and Gomorrah had been wiped out by God's avenging anger. The same would happen to Israel. It was an extremely dire situation and will be there at the end of the age.

Let us move forward a few chapters to chapter 5. We will read the first seven verses and then we will start up again in verse 13 and do my normal hop, skipping, and jumping through the chapter. Here He is talking about how He is justified in bringing His wrath on unruly and unrighteous Israel.

Isaiah 5:1-7 Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard [Notice God's attitude here. He calls Israel His beloved.]: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes.

"And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no more on it." For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.

Down to verse 13.

Isaiah 5:13-15 Therefore my people have gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore Sheol [the pit, the grave] has enlarged itself and opened its mouth beyond measure; their glory and their multitude and their pomp, and he who is jubilant, shall descend into it. People shall be brought down, each man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled.

Isaiah 5:24-30 Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will ascend like dust; because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Therefore the anger of the Lord is aroused against His people; He has stretched out His hand against them and stricken them, and the hills trembled. Their carcasses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.

He will lift up a banner to the nations from afar, and will whistle to them from the end of the earth; surely they shall come with speed, swiftly. No one will be weary or stumble among them, no one will slumber or sleep; nor will the belt on their loins be loose, nor the strap of their sandals be broken; whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses hooves will seem like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind.

Their roaring will be like a lion, they will roar like young lions; yes, they will roar and lay hold of the prey; they will carry it away safely, and no one will deliver. In that day they will roar against them like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks to the land, behold, darkness and sorrow; and the light is darkened by the clouds.

This is really depressing.

But what God is saying here is how justified He is in turning His wrath against these people. They behave exactly opposite of how He intended. He had given them strict instructions and they had agreed to behave that way and do what God wanted them to do. But they failed in every measure so they earn what is coming to them: famine and disease, war and captivity, slavery and death. These, He is showing in this chapter, are a direct result of their sin and their unfruitfulness.

Now I have really emphasized Israel's sin throughout this series and I have done that for a reason: because that is what God emphasizes throughout the history of Israel—that they have never been faithful to Him, that they have always gone another way. Their periods of so-called righteousness have been very slim and far between. So He wants us—modern Israel, the church of God, whoever is reading this at this point—He wants us to connect the sin with the punishment. He wants us to understand that sin has consequences, that He is not going to just oh-so-graciously forgive it all without the punishment that it is due. Not when it has piled up like this. He can do that for us because we have repented of our sins and seek Him and want to be like Him. We have a whole different attitude.

But with national Israel, they are stubborn. They have not been humbled. They have not the attitude to say, "God, we have sinned, please forgive us." They do not want that. In another place he says, they stick a branch up His nose. That is not very nice. That is not very respectful. That is how they feel about God. So He wants us to understand that He is entirely justified in doing this. He wants us to know that His wrath is not just the working of natural law. It is not just random. It is not even God being grumpy.

No, He wants us to understand, and if any of you social justice warriors are listening to this, I want you to understand this too. *God is justice* and what He will do to this nation is justice. There is no justice outside of law and outside of covenant, in terms of Israel. Israel broke the covenant spectacularly through sin and God's wrath is the lawful response. It is all there. Read it in God's Word. Read it and weep Israel! So we need to understand.

I hope this series on Israel is bringing that to the fore. That God hates sin so much He will condemn His own people down to the last few in order to get

rid of it. That is part of the covenant. It sounds so harsh, but He would be entirely justified to wipe every single Israelite off the face of the earth because they were all part of the agreement. But no, Israel is His beloved. He will save a remnant and try again.

Let us go to chapter 10, please. We will read verses 20 through 23 here. Please note the time marker at the beginning verse 20.

Isaiah 10:20-23 And it shall come to pass in that day [there is that time marker; it usually means the time of the end, the Day of the Lord; it puts us very much in the vicinity of Christ's return] that the remnant of Israel, and such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, will never again depend on him who defeated them [that is, their oppressors], but will depend on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. [he had to put the "in truth" in there so that we understood that hey, this is really going to happen] The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, a remnant of them will return; the destruction decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts will make a determined end in the midst of all the land.

Here we see a change happening, but it happens only with this remnant that is saved—the small number of people. It says they no longer have this attitude of depending on their oppressors, the nations that are around them: the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Syrians, the Egyptians (they were another one). They would always depend on those who were actually trying to oppress them. But they will actually turn to God! Wow! They will depend on, they will have faith in God. When has that ever happened? Very rarely. And that is why God has to put that "in truth" in there. It is really going to happen. They are going to depend on Him—in truth. They are changed people at this point. And I would think, with all the stuff that we have just read about God's punishment for their sins, that they would finally get the point.

So this remnant will return to God; what He has been trying to get Israel to do for millennia, and finally, a small, almost inconsequential fragment of them will do it. So the destruction that God decrees on them, He says will, in

the end, overflow with righteousness. This huge destruction of a mighty, multitudinous people of billions, say, or many, many millions at least, hundreds of millions of people who are descendants of Israel, and a few change, a few repent, and God calls it an overflow of righteousness. It is a little bit of irony, a little bit of sarcasm maybe, but it is the truth. It is what He has been looking for. He is happy that there are some that are changing, some that are turning.

What he is saying here is that the destruction and the justice that He sent upon Israel—actually what He had sent it to do—caused the people to change. And of course He is involved with that, as you know. Let us kind of see this from another perspective, in Zechariah chapter 12.

Zechariah 12:9-11 It shall be in that day [there is that time marker again] that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. 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. In that day, there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Haddad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

Zechariah 13:1 In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.

There will come a time in the future, both to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah, that they will, some very few of them, come to their senses and they will mourn, they will be humbled. Remember this just for the next 30 minutes or so because this mourning is a vital part of what we are going through today—this humbleness, this humiliation. But they will finally recognize that they are guilty, guilty of piercing that One, that Child of their own, their Son, and it will turn them, it will be part of the turning of Israel when it finally sinks through their very thick skulls. They have been rejecting the Messiah all along and God will put out His hand in grace and forgive them and offer them the Holy Spirit.

Let us go back to Isaiah. We were in chapter 10, now, we will be in chapter 11. We want to read verses 11 through 13. This is a very important chapter on this subject. It begins by extolling the nature and character of the Messiah. He is, you know, obviously a Rod from the stem of Jesse, but the Spirit of the Lord rests upon Him and it gives Him wisdom and understanding and counsel and might and knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight is in the fear of the Lord, etcetera. It goes on and talks about the character of the Son; and it is the character of the Messiah and the character of those who are under Him while He reigns that is going to make the Millennium possible.

The Holy Spirit is at its foundation, along with the knowledge of God and the fear of the Lord and righteousness and justice and equity and faithfulness; all those things that are named in the first part of the chapter, and then you get to verses 6 through 9 and he is describing the Millennium. The lion shall lie down, the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard with the young goat, etcetera. All of those things that we associate with the Millennium are a direct result of the character of the Messiah and that of His servants that helped Him during that time. Verse 10 shows Christ as the Standard that all the people people start to flock toward.

Isaiah 11:11-13 It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea. He will set up a banner [or beacon or a standard] for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries [actually, that word should probably be enmities, and the enmities] of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.

The first to rally to that standard that draws all people is the remnant. Here they are called the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah. Judah has always been known as the dispersion. That is what he is talking about. All those Jews scattered all around the world. And of course Israel has done the same but they are "lost." They are outcast. Nobody wants to recognize them

anymore. So the outcasts and the dispersed of Israel and Judah come back. They are drawn from all over the world. These may be and probably are the 144,000 of Israel that had been sealed at the beginning of the great tribulation there in Revelation 7:1-8.

But he says here, as we go through, that this is the second gathering, the Second Exodus, if you will, to conduct Israel to the Promised Land. And this Second Exodus is the more important of the two. And how great was that first one! But this is even greater because it has a greater purpose, that is, the salvation of Israel.

Now, one of the first things that God does with the gathered remnant is to forge a peace between Israel and Judah. Israel's envy and jealousy of Judah will be put off and Judah's enmity toward Israel will cease. This is a huge step because they have been a disunited nation now for about 2,000 to 3,000 years, since right after the reign of Solomon. And the reuniting of Israel and Judah is huge! What it does, why it is so huge is that this step unites them into one nation to be used by Christ and by David, who will be their prince.

Let us go somewhere else. I am trying to give you all of these steps that have to take place during this time. Let us go to Ezekiel the 37th chapter. This uniting of Israel and Judah is mentioned here. Let us read verses 15 through 25.

Ezekiel 37:15-25 Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: 'For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.' Then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.' Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.

And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, 'Will you not show us what you mean by these?—say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I

will join them with it with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand." And the sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.

Then say to them, "Thus says the Lord God: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.

They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God. David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever."

So we see the same thing that was said in Isaiah 11 said again in Ezekiel 37 but expanded quite a bit more here.

Now, the flow of these chapters as you get toward the end of Ezekiel indicates that this uniting of Israel will happen actually twice. There is a small one at the beginning of the Millennium and then there will be a massive one after the second resurrection when all of those Israelites and Jews who were never called come up in that resurrection and have to face life again and have to learn to live in unity with one another. We are interested in the small one though at the beginning of the Millennium.

In the metaphor here they become one stick. And it is interesting that a stick is probably the simplest of tools, you might say. You could pick a stick up from the ground and use it for all kinds of different things. You can dig a

hole, you can use it to hold on to, or swat flies or whatever. There is a lot of things you could use a stick for, and God says finally He is going to have His stick back. One stick, not two sticks that were divided. He is going to have one strong stick again and it is going to be in His hand. God is going to have a tool to use and He is going to use that tool for a lot of different reasons. I mean, one stick might be to beat other nations if they happen to be recalcitrant, rebellious. He could use that stick to build cities, He could use that stick for many other reasons that I have not thought of but you could probably think of.

He will use the stick that is united Israel to do all kinds of wonderful things in the Millennium because now He has got a united people that believe the same way and they are all going in the same direction and they are supported by their God, King Jesus Christ, and things are going to happen. It is that uniting of Israel that is one of the big steps to make that happen.

One of the main jobs He is going to use that stick for, though, is to get Israel to do what they promised to do in the very beginning: to be the example nation before the world. I mean, that is what they said in Exodus 19:5-8 and Deuteronomy 4:5-8. They said, "Oh yeah, we will do it." They promised and they failed, they hardly even started to do any of that sort of thing. And so God, in the Millennium, is going to put them through their paces and say, "Look, you better do it, you better be that example nation." But being converted now, the one stick of Israel is going to comply, they are going to obey, they are going to do it because now they are going the same direction as God. They are seeing things as He sees it. And so with David as their leader, they are going to do it.

Ezekiel 37:26-28 "Moreover [He says] I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My Tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God and they shall be My people. [What happened in Hosea's prophecy is turned around and they are no longer not My people, now they are My people. He says,] The nations also will know that I, the Lord, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever."

So this is a hint that Israel does what they were supposed to do from the very beginning in being the nation among whom God lived and of course the people will be examples of that type of life.

Notice God promises to make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant. Of course, He is speaking of the New Covenant, envisioned here as a kind of peace offering or the meal using a peace offering. It is a perpetual agreement of fellowship and accord. God will be with them, He will live among them, and they will be able to interact with Him and His representatives. The nations will see this and be drawn to Israel's special relationship with God.

They will want what Israel has, which was the whole intent from the very beginning. That the other nations would look and say, "What fine laws you have, what prosperity you have. How did all this happen? Why is all this happening; all this good stuff happening to you and not to us?" And they will say, "Because we have a covenant with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and He gives us these blessings and He moves us to do these good things." And they will want to join.

Let us go to Jeremiah the 31st chapter. We will start at the beginning and go down through verse 11, and then 15 through 22. I should just mention here that I had a hard time picking out verses because there is so much in the prophets, in the Psalms, even in the Pentateuch about these sorts of things: the redemption of Israel, the remnant, their punishment, the covenant being renewed, or what have you. There is just so much you can almost flip open any place and if you are not in a section that is about Moab and Philistia and Ammon, you are probably in a place that talks about, "Hey, I want Israel back, this is what they have done, this is what I'll do and there is a Second Exodus coming and a covenant that's going to be made made." So please feel free to study some more about this.

Jeremiah 31:1-11 "At the same time," [if you look up to verse 24 of Jeremiah 30 he is talking about the latter days] 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 loving kindness 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.

For there shall be a day when the watchman will cry on Mount Ephraim, 'Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God.'" For thus says the Lord: "Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, 'Oh 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 31:15-22 Thus says the Lord [we are kind of backtracking a little bit here]: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." Thus says the Lord: "Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.

There is hope in your future, says the Lord, that your children shall come back to their own border. I have surely heard Ephraim

bemoaning himself: 'You have chastised me, and I was chastised, like an untrained bull; restore me, and I will return, for You are the Lord my God. Surely, after my turning, I repented; and after I was instructed, I struck myself on the thigh; I was ashamed, yes, even humiliated, because I bore the reproach of my youth.'

Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the Lord. Set up signposts, make landmarks; set your heart toward the highway, the way in which you went. Turn back, O virgin of Israel, turn back to these cities. How long will you gad about, O you backsliding daughter? For the Lord has created a new thing in the earth—a woman shall encompass a man."

Before we go any further with that, I just want to say here that this last little bit is probably a proverbial or idiomatic saying. But it is three words in Hebrew" woman, encircle or encompass or surround, and man, a strong man. Woman, encompass, man. We English people do not understand what that means. But it is probably an idiomatic saying that means, "Can you believe it, that such a thing would happen?" And so God ends this little passage here by saying, "Can you believe that Israel is actually coming back!" It is excitement from God, almost like "I never thought it would happen, but it's actually happening! That something so strange would happen, that Israel would repent and actually come back to Me." That is almost giddy with excitement. That is kind of the feeling that you get from it.

Now, this chapter describes how God provides real salvation to Israel through grace and that is why verse 2 is so key here. That He provides grace in the wilderness to them, even though they have been through the wars, they have been through the captivity and the slavery, they have been through so much famine and disease and distress, but He does give grace to the humble. The humbled remnant finds that grace in the wilderness after almost complete annihilation. That is how far it has to go.

God then, in the next few verses says He is basically going to start over and woo them again, woo His beloved back to Him through these few of the remnant. And not only are they regathered, but redeemed—ransomed, their

sins paid for—and the remnant will respond with repentance. As God puts in Ephraim's mouth here, "That he will take instruction," he will actually listen to God! And after listening to God and thinking about it, he will strike himself on the thigh in regret and shame. "Why did we do that? Why did I in my youth (speaking of Ephraim here) sin so grievously? Why did I turn from God?" And he will be ashamed.

And then they will begin to love God. The love of God shed abroad in their hearts will begin to come out as love for Him. And of course, love for their brethren. And it is truly like he says here, "a new thing" that Israel will finally embrace her God. It had never happened before.

Let us finish out this chapter, starting in verse 31. We all know this one. We have we read it quite a lot.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord.

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

This is the culmination of that process that will happen right about the time that He returns, and once He does return, this is what he will do. This will be among the very first things that He will do. That gathered remnant comes back to Him and He will make a covenant with them, not like the first covenant, but a much better, a superior covenant. They will finally be in the right attitude to have God's law written on their hearts. They will have an open mind and open heart to Him, and He will begin to inscribe it on them,

and they will accept their place as God's people. In Ezekiel 36, something very similar is said.

Ezekiel 36:24-29 "For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people and I will be your God. [we have heard that several times in these particular passages] I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses.

Notice that God promises not just a New Covenant but a cleansing of sin—forgiveness—and His Holy Spirit within them. This deliverance is spiritual salvation that He is offering them and they accept, they become converted. They are like you and me. This is a national conversion of that remnant that comes out of the great tribulation. And this is where the Day of Atonement comes into the picture. This is the prophetic step in God's plan that Atonement symbolizes.

We used to think that this day pictured the binding of Satan because of its place at the beginning of Revelation 20 between the return of Christ and the beginning of the Millennium. Now I am sure that will happen in that spot. But it is not what the Day of Atonement symbolizes. This Day of Atonement has nothing NOTHING to do with Satan the Devil. This has *everything* to do with God and His people reconciling to one another and being forgiven of their sins and becoming His people. That is what the ritual in Leviticus 16 teaches us. It does not teach us about some angelic being that is supposedly the cause of all of our sins. He may have influenced our sins, but we sinned, not him. He has to bear his own sins. But there is agency through Jesus Christ for us to be forgiven of our sins and the same applies to the people of Israel. This is a day of God and His people being one because the sin is forgiven.

Let us go back to Leviticus 23 and I want you to notice a few things here. I tried to point out a few of them obliquely as we were going through the prophecy about Israel being returned to the land and being forgiven. I hope you caught them. If not, I will probably point them out again. But let us go to Leviticus 23 and this is the instructions, the command we are given for this day. We will read verses 26 through 32.

Leviticus 23:26-29 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement [Yom Kippur, the day of covering]. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you [he is speaking to the children of Israel] before the Lord your God. For any person who is not afflicted of soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people."

Very interesting. I hope you are thinking this through about what happens in the end time and what He is commanding us to do, His people to do, on the Day of Atonement. What happened to the ones that were not humble of Israel or what will happen to those Israelites who are not humble in the end? They do not make it as the remnant.

Leviticus 23:30-32 "And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath."

This is the day that commemorates when human sins are covered and cleansed by the ultimate sacrifice for sin, Jesus Christ. You could go to I John 1:7 where it says that His blood cleanses us from all sin; not just us, but the whole world can eventually claim the blood of Jesus Christ. Now, through the sacrifice of His sinless life, He pays the price for human sin. That is the only way that it can happen.

Remember, the blood of bulls and goats cannot do it. Only the precious blood of Jesus Christ can forgive sin—our Creator, the One whose worth is more than all of us combined. Only that precious blood can atone for or expiate or recompense the sins that we have committed. Nothing else pays the price. He is the propitiation or our atoning sacrifice to cover our sins. You can find that in I John 2:2. He is the key in all of this, and it is His work that He does that makes it all possible. We do not have anything to do with it. We cannot give anything to cause the redemption for our sins, the recompense for our sins. We cannot give \$100 or whatever it is. You know, we cannot give an arm or a leg, that will not work. The only thing that pays for sin is the blood of our Creator God. So we do no work.

Now this command here Leviticus 23 tells us to do three things. And all three are symbolic and all three fit with the fulfillment.

1) We are to afflict our souls by fasting, by not eating or drinking. This is a part of the mourning that we go through, our humbled state, and also the remnants' humble state coming out of tribulation. They have been fasting because they are famished because of famine. Their souls are afflicted because of destruction and disease and all the terrible things that have happened coming out of the great tribulation. That is how the remnant will return to Him. They come back mourning, afflicted of soul.

2) We are to have a holy convocation on this day, a meeting at which we listen to God's teaching. Like Ephraim finally does at the end and Israel will finally be open to God's instruction because they finally stop and listen.

3) We are not to work at all because we can do nothing to affect our salvation. God has to do all that work. Sure, we have to believe and repent and submit and we think that is pretty heavy work to do. But the part about actually paying for sins, all of that is Christ's work, not ours. Like I said, we do not do anything for that, that is by grace. So we are saved by grace through faith, not by works. That is in Ephesians 2:8. And the same thing happens to Israel. They find grace in the wilderness.

Let us go to Leviticus 16 and look at just very briefly the sacrifices that are made here on the Day of Atonement. We are not going to read this whole chapter (and if you want the nitty gritty read David's articles on these, every

little iota is explained). But I just want to go over them in a general way. Let us start reading in verse 3, we are kind of skipping right into the middle of this.

Leviticus 16:3-10 "Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of a young bull as a sin offering, and of a ram as a burnt offering. He shall put the holy linen tunic and the linen trousers on his body; he shall be girded with a linen sash, and with the linen turban he shall be attired. These are holy garments.

Therefore he shall wash his body in water, and put them on. And he shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a sin offering, and one ram as a burnt offering. Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat [or Azazel, which is better rendered the goat of departure]. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the Lord's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the [goat of departure] shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the [goat of departure] into the wilderness."

Like I said without getting into all the nitty gritty details, what happens is that the high priest offers the bull as a sin offering to cover his sins and the sins of his priestly house. That has to be done because he has to go in and do the work in the Tabernacle, and to do this kind of work, he needs to be clear of sin, he needs to be clean, he needs to be pure, so he does that. So he offers the slain bull which represents Christ and it is that blood that cleanses him from sin.

Then the two goats are presented before God, lots are cast to determine which is for the Lord and which is for Azazel, as I mentioned, the goat of departure, a goat of complete removal. Like the bull, the goat for the Lord is slain as a sin offering, its blood is shed. But it says specifically here that its

sacrifice pictures the cleansing of the *people* of Israel. So you had the bull that was for the priest's sins and then you have the first goat that is supposed to represent cleansing of the people of Israel.

Leviticus 16:15-22 "Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. [this is where God sits] So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of the of their uncleanness.

There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when he [the high priest] goes in to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel [because he has the blood of the bull, the blood of the goat]. And he shall go out to the altar that is before the Lord, and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. [so he is sanctifying, making holy all of these different accouterments that are used in the sacrifice here, the altars where these things are burned, etcetera]

Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and sanctify it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. [This is all the first goat and the bull. He is covering the sins of the people through blood, a blood sacrifice.] And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. [This is a continuing sacrifice. This is many steps, but one long sacrifice here.]

Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions [notice this a verbal thing and he is laying his hands

on this goat and he is saying, "These are all the sins of the children of Israel" and they are named. Everybody knows them, those who hear what he is saying. And it is being confessed that they are sinful people and that they have these sins and they cannot bear them.], putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land [or a land of forgetfulness, you might say]; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

This is the bulk of what happened there on the Day of Atonement. So all the children of Israel's sins are confessed and placed on this live goat, this goat of complete removal, and it is led into the wilderness by a suitable man, it says, a person who has been chosen for this task, and released. This goat is also part of the sin offering. If you go back to verse 5, it says very clearly "he shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a sin offering." They are two goats, one offering—one offering for sin. Each, though, shows a different aspect of the one offering. It is one offering in two parts, the covering of or atoning for sin by a blood sacrifice is the first goat and the second goat represents the bearing or carrying away, the removal, that is why it is called the goat of complete removal of sin into forgetfulness.

Let us go to Isaiah 53. We all read this at Passover time, but it is for fulfillment of the offering that is done on the Day of Atonement.

Isaiah 53:4-12 Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows [we know who this is talking about]; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. [there is that afflicted again] But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter [a goat to the slaughter], and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened

not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation?

For He was cut off [that is, killed] from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.

When you make His soul an offering for sin [His body, His life an offering for sin], He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. [this is a oblique reference to resurrection] He shall see the travail [labor] of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

So this tells us in all this figurative language that Christ both shed His blood and died to pay for our sins and He bore our iniquities away. The two parts of the atonement offering as Psalm 103:12 says, "As far as east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Isaiah 43:25 reads, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins."

Let us go to Hebrews the 9th chapter and see this from a New Testament perspective.

Hebrews 9:11-15 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 9:23-28 Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands [like the Levitical high priest did], which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—

He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly await for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

We apply this to ourselves under the New Covenant, and so it does. But it also applies to the remnant of Israel who will come back, trembling and with great humility to the land of Israel. They will be repentant and sorrowful. They will slap themselves on the thigh, as it were, and say, "Why did we ever do that?" Before the Millennium can truly begin, they will embrace their God, the returned Jesus Christ, and He will forgive them, redeeming them from their bondage to their sins. And with this new Israel—converted Israel—He will make the New Covenant and they will become the human nucleus of His Kingdom, the wonderful World Tomorrow.