

Living in the Kingdom

Lesson 25: The Final Marriage

The Dramatic Love Story of Israel and the Church



Introduction

- Israel in the Bible and the modern state of Israel: What is the connection?
- The conflict in the Middle East: Does it have spiritual roots?
- Jesus and the Jews: Does Israel still have a role in God's plan since Messiah has come?
- The relationship between the Church and the Jewish people: How has it been and how should it be?
- Israel or "the Holy Land"? A museum of the past or the center of God's plan today?
- The life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus follows closely the pattern of the life, passion, death and resurrection of Israel

The Old Testament Story of Israel

- The patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God promises to make a great nation out of their offspring; He will give them the land of Canaan. (Gen 12:1-3, 13:14-17, 35:10-12)
- God makes 3 promises to Abraham: great nation, great name (kingdom) and blessing through him of all families of the earth. The promises are fulfilled under the Mosaic Covenant (nation and land), the Davidic Covenant (dynastic kingdom), and the New Covenant (worldwide blessing).
- Joseph and his brothers (Gen 37-50): a foreshadow of the relationship between Jesus and the Jewish people.
- The Exodus: led by Moses, initiated by the Passover lamb, crossing the Red Sea, receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai, 40 years in the desert, sustained by the manna.
- The Promised Land: a divine inheritance... but with a warning... and a guarantee of God's faithfulness: even if Israel is exiled because of their sin, God will faithfully return them to their land. (Deut. 28:58-64, 30:1-6, 19-20)
- The Davidic kingdom: the crowning glory of the history of Israel. The Jerusalem temple is a house of prayer for all nations.
- Destruction and Exile because of Israel's sins (586 B.C.E.). The prophets provide hope that God will return the Jews to their land. (Jer 16:14-16, 23:7-8, 24:5-6, 32:37-44, Ezek 36-37, Amos 9:14-15)
- Partial return to Israel and rebuilding of temple: but the promises of restoration are not fully accomplished: the return is only *partial* and *temporary*; Israel will be exiled again, and they have not yet received the new and everlasting covenant.

Jesus: the Messiah of Israel

- Jesus has come to reveal the love of the Father and proclaim the kingdom of God.
- The **new Son of David** and king of Israel.
- The **new Moses**: comes out of Egypt; passes through the waters of the Jordan; tempted 40 days in the desert; gives a renewed Law; provides bread from Heaven; establishes a New Covenant with Israel.
- The **new Son of Abraham**: the Father provided his only Son as Paschal lamb, offered as the sacrifice of the New Covenant restoring man's communion with God.
- The **new Adam**: Jesus' obedience in the Garden of Gethsemane reversed Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden.
- The Paschal Mystery: Jesus is rejected by his own people. Through his passion, death, resurrection and ascension he wins redemption for Israel and the whole human race.

The Birth of the Church

- The Church is to bring the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile: Gentile Christians do not need to convert to Judaism; Jewish Christians do not cease to be Jews (Acts 15, 21).
- Paul's illustration of the olive tree (Rom. 11:17-24): natural branches (Jews) were broken off and wild branches (Gentiles) grafted in. Warning to the gentiles not to become proud lest they too be cut off. The Jews will be re-grafted in later.
- Destruction of Temple and end of biblical Judaism (70 AD). Biblical Judaism is transformed into Rabbinical Judaism. Disastrous Bar Kochba revolt (132-135) leads to the exile and dispersion of the Jews.
- The parting of ways of Church and Synagogue: Jewish Christians, rejected by both Jews and Christians become a minority and almost disappear. By the fourth century Christianity becomes a Gentile religion, divorced from Judaism.

The "Passion" of Israel

- The Church Fathers: anti-Jewish polemic and "replacement theology":
 - God has revoked his election of Israel; the Church is the "new Israel"
 - The Jews are "Christ killers", guilty of "deicide."
 - Curses of the OT are meant for the Jews; blessings for Christians.
- Augustine's theory of the Jews as a "witness people" who witness to Christian truth by their exile and sufferings.
- Anti-Jewish legislation begins under the Byzantines, continues throughout Middle-Ages.
- Growing enmity and violence between Jews & Christians. Many popes defend the Jews.
- Missionary efforts to the Jews: the policy of assimilation forced baptized Jews to deny and reject their Jewish roots.
- Christian anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages: crusade massacres, ritual murder and blood libels, burning of Talmud, Spanish Inquisition, expulsions and settling in ghettos.
- Modern anti-Semitism: religious anti-Judaism turns into racial anti-Semitism. Pogroms in Russia; the Holocaust.

The Jews and the Cross

- Both Israel and Jesus are the Lord's suffering servant (Isaiah 53).
- The history of the Jews since the Messiah's coming has become a long way to Calvary.
- Edith Stein (Jewish-Catholic nun, perished in Auschwitz) and the Holocaust: believed that the Cross was now being laid on the Jewish people.
- Hatred of Israel = Hatred of Christ.
- As the Jews have treated their Messiah, so the Church has treated the Jews.
- Pope John Paul II: "Erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people and their alleged culpability have circulated for too long."

Paul and the Mystery of Israel

- God has not rejected his people. All Israel will be saved (Rom 11).
- Four stages in the spreading of the Gospel and the salvation of the world:
 - Jews reject, Gentiles accept, Gentiles reject, Jews accept.

Promises of Restoration

- The valley of dry bones promises the resurrection of a dead Israel (Ezek. 37).
- Israel will be regathered into their land. They will receive a new heart and new spirit (Ezek. 11:17-20, 36:24-28). The land of Israel will bloom again (Ezek. 36:8-11).
- The scriptures announce a restoration in two stages: 1) Physical restoration in state of unrighteousness; 2) Spiritual restoration: sprinkling of water, new heart, new spirit.

Restoration

- The State of Israel is born (1948). The War of Independence (1948-49). Israel wins against all odds but Jerusalem remains divided.
- Vatican II and *Nostra Aetate* (1962-65): Rejects anti-Semitism and “replacement theology”.
- 1967: The Six-Day War. Jerusalem returns under Jewish sovereignty. “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, *until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*” (Lk 21:24)
- The rise of Messianic Judaism (Jews who believe in Jesus).
- The Hebrew-Catholic community.
- Israel and the Church: toward union. The destiny of Israel can only be accomplished in union with their Messiah and with the Church. Two errors:
 - Replacement theology: abolishment or spiritualizing of all promises made to Israel
 - Dual-covenant theology: Jesus is for gentiles only; the destiny of Israel is separated from the Church
- The rebirth of Israel is not an end in itself but neither is it an “accident of history.” It may be a preparation for Israel’s final encounter with divine grace.

Redemption through Trials?

- Jerusalem: a cup of trembling (Zech 12). The war of Gog and Magog (Ezek 38-39).
- Israel, constant target of Muslim terrorism.
- Anti-Semitism and violence against non-Muslims in the Qur’an and Islamic tradition.
- Arab nations’ denial of Israel’s right to exist.
- Rising world anti-Semitism masked as anti-Zionism.
- Israel will recognize the Messiah after God delivers Jerusalem from all the nations that rose against her (Zech 12:8-10).
- The second coming is suspended until Jesus’ recognition by all Israel (CCC 674).
- The coming of the antichrist and final Passover of the Church (CCC 675-677).

The Middle-East Conflict: A Biblical Perspective

- A conflict between the claims of the Bible and those of the Qur’an.
- If God is at work in restoring Israel to himself for the final redemption of the world, expect opposition to this plan in the form of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.
- A “permanent” peace in the Middle East achieved by human diplomacy may prove to be deceptive. True peace will only come through the Messiah.

Israel and the Church: A Christian Response

- Identificational repentance for the sins of Christians against the Jewish people. Christians should repent in the name of their spiritual fathers for:
 - Anti-Semitism and persecution of Jews
 - The false teaching of replacement theology
 - The suppression and loss of the Jewish identity of the Church.
- Love Israel and the Jewish people. The Jews are “our dearly beloved brothers” (JPII).
- Study the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.
- Pray for the protection and salvation of Israel, and for the conversion of Muslims (and of Christians!).
- Do not be ashamed of the Gospel. Speak the truth in love.

